Evaluation of the Nepal Emergency Cash Transfer Programme through Social Assistance

Final Report

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Acknowledgments

Executive summary

Introduction

As a response to the devastating earthquakes in Nepal in April and May 2015, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) developed and implemented a large-scale Emergency Cash Transfer Programme (ECTP), in collaboration with the Government of Nepal (GoN). UNICEF provided financial and technical support to the GoN to expand the existing social assistance cash transfer programme in earthquake-affected areas in two phases. UNICEF's financial support to the GoN for both phases of the cash programme amounted to $26 million. The two phases of the ECTP are the first steps towards UNICEF's longer-term objectives of helping the GoN establish a model of rapid social transfers to vulnerable groups during future emergencies, and ultimately to strengthen the social protection system for children in Nepal.

Oxford Policy Management (OPM) was contracted by UNICEF to undertake an independent evaluation of the ECTP. This evaluation consists of two parts: a process evaluation to understand how the ECTP was implemented and experienced, and a formative component, which consolidates the learning from using social protection systems in an emergency response context to inform the potential future use of such approaches in Nepal and globally. To ensure that the evaluation addresses evaluation objectives in a coherent and consistent way, our evaluation relies on the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria for evaluations.

The evaluation approach consists of primary qualitative data collected from a variety of stakeholders, including GoN staff, UNICEF, and implementing partners at the central, district, and village/ward levels. In addition, the research team engaged with beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of both phases at the village/ward levels. Primary research was complemented with secondary data analysis to develop a holistic understanding of the programme. The evaluation team used a reflexive approach to address and mitigate the limitations in the research, which are discussed in greater detail in the report.

UNICEF's ability to quickly provide financial support to a significant share of the vulnerable population in programme districts, immediately following devastating earthquakes in a country famous for its difficult terrain, is commendable. By partnering with the government and working to build upon and bolster the existing social protection system UNICEF not only successfully demonstrated strong commitment towards their long-term country objectives in Nepal, but also added further credibility to the programme.

Numerous important but difficult choices had to be made during the design and implementation of the programme in a time of crisis. The potential costs and benefits of the alternative choices not made have to be considered in this evaluation, but it is clear that UNICEF staff were aware of these difficult choices and trade-offs, and made decisions to maximise benefits and limit costs within these constraints. The focus of this evaluation has been on providing forensic analysis to weigh both the choices and costs, so as to assess the programme in such a way that the findings will be useful to UNICEF, government partners, and other interested organisations seeking to improve their approach in similar emergency cases in Nepal and elsewhere. In presenting our evaluation of the programme we acknowledge the coverage and quality of the programme, and we commend UNICEF's deep understanding, and excellent analysis, of the situation as regards addressing the immediate needs of vulnerable groups in Nepal.

Key findings – Phase 1

Design

Phase 1 of UNICEF's ECTP was aligned closely with the GoN's existing cash-based social assistance programmes supporting vulnerable groups, and it relied on their systems for beneficiary identification and transfer of payments. UNICEF made a conscious decision to work with the existing social protection system and beneficiary lists, and to prioritise the potential for speedy delivery, at the risk of excluding people affected by the earthquake but not included in the GoN's list of social protection beneficiaries.

During Phase 1, UNICEF provided a 'top-up' of Nepali Rupees (NPR) 3,000 ($30) to all beneficiaries of regular social protection payments in 19 programme districts. The intention was to synchronise both payments to capitalise on the existing system without further burdening the actors involved.

The cash transfer was not envisioned as a complete package to meet all the relief needs of households; rather, it was intended to be complementary to other ongoing relief efforts in the country.

Overall, the targeting mechanism was well received at the community level, since the eligibility for social protection payments is well understood at that level.

Respondents at the beneficiary level were generally appreciative of the decision to distribute cash over goods, since cash allowed them to buy what they needed, especially in a context where markets were generally functioning.

While most government officials agreed with UNICEF's decision to provide cash support, some officials, largely at local levels, were critical of cash transfers due to the untested perception that cash leads to dependency. They opined that longer-term investment, particularly in infrastructure or income-generation activities, might be a better use of the funds, even in an emergency context.

Implementation

The ECTP was successfully able to reach 434,690 individuals, or 93% of regular social protection beneficiaries, exceeding the programme's own target of 85% coverage.

The funds disbursement process varied across districts: the disbursement process started in early July and most beneficiaries had received their payments by October 2015, five months after the first earthquake; however, a small share of beneficiaries had not received their payments by as late as mid-November.

Initially, the programme roll-out was delayed as the Nepal Cabinet's approval of the programme took nearly a month. This was followed by a slow fund transfer process from UNICEF to DDCs due to the complex administrative processes and the low capacity of District Development Committees (DDCs) and banks themselves. At the local level reasons for delays included: Village Development Committee (VDC) secretaries having to withdraw large sums of money and physically carry the money to villages; accessibility issues, given the timing of the transfer (monsoon season); and DDCs deciding to align cash transfer payments with the next round of regular social assistance payments.

DDCs received the ECTP payments directly from UNICEF. The VDC secretaries then received the ECTP money from the DDC, withdrew the cash at the district centre where banks exist, and carried the physical cash back to their villages for distribution. Beneficiaries in most municipalities received their cash directly in their bank accounts, as with their regular social protection payments.

To collect their emergency cash transfers, beneficiaries had to bring their social security book ('*Bhatta'* card). No additional documentation was required to collect the funds.

Monitoring

UNICEF developed a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan for the ECTP in July 2015, soon after the ECTP design was approved. Plans for monitoring activities were embedded in programme design from the start of implementation, including real-time process/operations monitoring as well as the monitoring of outcomes.

The ongoing monitoring activities were handled by UNICEF central staff, Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD) representatives, the cash transfer focal person at the UNICEF emergency site offices, a nominated district focal person (DFP) from the Nepal Participatory Action Network (NEPAN), Nepal Scouts, and DDC staff.

Real-time monitoring purposely involved many actors in order to overcome weaknesses in specific areas. However, there was often no clear demarcation of roles. As a result, some areas were completely excluded while others were visited numerous times.

The programme tried to implement a voluntary SMS system for beneficiaries to confirm receipt of payments and provide their feedback. However, very few beneficiaries reported receiving or using the SMS system.

UNICEF collated the ongoing field monitoring data to maintain a centralised management information system (MIS) to track district-wise progress in programme implementation. UNICEF also utilised the monitoring data to inform conversations with DDC staff about delays in distribution and reporting, and how they could be addressed.

The ECTP mainly relied on the grievance redressal system associated with the GoN's social security system, under which people usually communicated their complaints directly with VDC/ward secretaries and Local Development Officers (LDOs) at the DDCs. Since beneficiary list was pre-determined in Phase 1, there were very few cases of discontent.

NEPAN was contracted to carry out an independent sample-based post-distribution monitoring (PDM) exercise to gather information on the coverage, processes, and perceptions about Phase 1, as well as on how the cash was used by beneficiaries.

UNICEF shared the final PDM survey report with all LDOs and presented the findings at the orientation workshops with LDOs and DDC, VDC and municipality officials from all Phase 2 programme districts. However, none of the GoN or implementing staff consulted as a part of this research at the district or local levels recalled the NEPAN report, and they were often disgruntled about being unable to use this information for their own planning purposes.

There was agreement among most respondents that beneficiaries used the cash appropriately to meet immediate needs for food, clothing, and medicine. Claims relating to misuse of cash were closely related to discriminatory perceptions about other people's ethnicity, and were limited.

Financial reporting from DDCs to UNICEF was not timely due to capacity constraints at DDCs, UNICEF and banks, coupled with the complexity of UNICEF's own administrative procedures and exacerbated by the scale of the programme operations. Due to delayed financial reconciliation in Phase 1, Phase 2 implementation was also delayed as UNICEF is unable to disburse additional funds to a partner until all outstanding accounts from previous transfers have been cleared.

Communication

Communication with beneficiaries took place through multiple mediums: local radio, Nepal Scouts, leaflets, and local networks. In practice, most people heard about the top-up through the VDC office and by word of mouth from their neighbours, relatives, or local politicians.

The relative ease of administering these funds through the established system (and pre-identified list of beneficiaries) meant that the programme could be rolled out quickly and easily. However, people were less clear about where the 'additional' money came from, for what purpose, and whether it would come again, thereby highlighting the need for effective programme communication.

Communication for the ECTP through the GoN was top-down in the first instance: UNICEF staff communicated with the Department of Civil Registration (DoCR) at MoFALD, who passed information down to DDCs and VDCs/municipalities, usually via a letter. This was followed by a phone conversation between UNICEF and a DDC official introducing the programme, after which there was an orientation session conducted by UNICEF staff in each district.

This approach of limited face-to-face engagement resulted in local officials having an incomplete understanding of the project and of their own roles. This resulted in them being unable to accurately and effectively communicate information about the programme to the community.

Coordination

UNICEF coordinated with other actors in Nepal following the earthquakes, through its consistent participation in the national-level Cash Coordination Group (CCG).

Coordination within UNICEF was fairly straightforward since there was one person responsible for the cash transfer programme for each district – although sometimes the focal person was responsible for multiple districts at the same time. Centrally, however, engagement between the emergency unit and the social protection team implementing the cash transfer could be strengthened further, through improved communication and continuous collaboration throughout the programme.

Generally, there was limited understanding among district- and village-/ward-level respondents about the need for coordination with other stakeholders, suggesting that coordination between actors is likely to have been limited.

Key findings – Phase 2

Design

The programme's focus on children across all ethnicities was well received by most respondents, especially at the community level.

As in Phase 1, while beneficiaries of the cash transfer were largely happy with the targeting mechanism as well as the choice to distribute cash rather than goods, government staff voiced concerns that the cash transfer could cause dependency among the beneficiaries.

Compared to Phase 1, there was greater concern among government officials regarding the appropriateness of a cash transfer. Although government officials were supportive of regular social protection payments to identified vulnerable groups with specific acute needs, they were usually critical of short-term cash payments to various groups unless these were meant for immediate relief after emergencies, due to their belief that it would only make people more reliant on external support.

Implementation

UNICEF supported a household census to develop a registry of all children under five years of age to support the expansion of the child grant in programme districts. The Population Health and Development group (PHD group) were contracted to work with local governments to carry out the census.

The census exercise was able to successfully identify and register roughly 85%[1] of eligible beneficiaries, for whom UNICEF started Phase 2 implementation following the same processes as in Phase 1. However, since the census exercise missed out a sizeable portion of children in the target districts, a second round of beneficiary registrations was carried out. Despite the provision of consistent implementation guidelines, VDC and municipal ward secretaries adopted different approaches to this, with the result that each VDC/ward sent multiple lists of new beneficiaries in different formats to the DDC.

The payments for Phase 2 were planned for the June 2016 round of social protection disbursements. However, due to implementation delays stemming from delays in Phase 1 financial reporting, problems with the census coverage, and pressures on the time of local officials, the process was still ongoing in November 2016, when the NEPAN PDM survey was conducted.

The cut-off date for all VDCs/municipalities to send their final lists of excluded beneficiaries was August 2016. However, none of the VDC/ward secretaries we visited were aware of this, and some were still in the process of adding new people to the list at the time of fieldwork.[2]

Although Phase 2 implementation faced many challenges, it was able to successfully universalise the child grant in programme districts, in line with UNICEF and GoN priorities.

Monitoring

UNICEF developed a comprehensive M&E plan for Phase 2 of the ECTP. The monitoring arrangements in Phase 2, like in Phase 1, included real-time internal monitoring through UNICEF, DoCR, and NEPAN DFPs, complemented by PDM data collected through NEPAN's sample-based survey. The post-intervention evaluation was carried out by an external third-party firm during Phase 2. The present report is the final report on this evaluation.

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[1] UNICEF (2016) 'Survey note on the ECTP post-distribution household survey', 07 December 2016.
[2] The 'Survey note on the ECTP post-distribution household survey' notes that two districts failed to submit the data on additional children on time, and were therefore only provided payments for census children. This is likely to affect community relationships, especially given that people who had been missed by the census were already very frustrated with the system and anxious about receiving their payments.

During Phase 2, UNICEF established and implemented an additional system of SMS-based PDM. UNICEF sent out SMS messages to all beneficiaries who had provided a mobile phone number during the census exercise. The response rate to the SMS survey was low, as only 8.5% of the total 132,605 people who were contacted responded to it.

As with Phase 1 monitoring, at the village and ward levels, respondents were mostly unaware of monitoring activities, and of any actors involved in the process. This is likely to be related to the scale of programme operations – it was difficult for the field teams from UNICEF, as well as NEPAN, to visit all the VDCs and municipalities included in the programme.

The grievance mechanism in Phase 2 introduced a toll-free phone number and the SMS platform, though beneficiaries preferred to use the traditional approach of escalating complaints via VDC/ward secretaries, local politicians, and DDC staff.

In Phase 2, NEPAN was again hired to conduct the PDM exercise on a sample of beneficiaries. The fieldwork was ongoing at the time of our research, and included beneficiaries identified through both rounds of registrations.

There was agreement among most respondents that beneficiaries used the cash appropriately to meet basic needs for food, clothing, and medication. Beneficiaries in Phase 2 reported saving the funds received more often, compared to beneficiaries in Phase 1.

Communication

Communication with beneficiaries took place through multiple sources: local radio, SMS messages, local networks, and word of mouth. As in Phase 1, most beneficiaries reported hearing about the programme through word of mouth communication.

In Phase 2, SMS messages were sent directly to phone numbers collected during the census exercise. SMS messaging was of two types: general information about the programme before disbursements, followed by messages promoting the use of cash for improved nutrition once distributions had been made.

Even though people who were on the list eventually heard about the disbursement and collected their funds, there was a lack of awareness about who the funds were from, how many times they would get the transfer, and why they had received it. In addition, the SMS campaign had limited success since very few respondents reported receiving the SMSs (9.4% in the NEPAN sample).

There was a lot of anxiety among potential beneficiaries who had been missed, since they were unsure when the funds would come and whether they would get the money at all. Potential beneficiaries often enquired with the OPM teams during field visits about whether they would receive funds, and when, as they were dissatisfied with the communication from VDC/municipality secretaries.

Communication between UNICEF and district and local officials was primarily through line ministries, as in Phase 1. UNICEF then organised a programme orientation and planning meeting with LDOs of all 11 programme districts, and a separate orientation session for VDC and municipality staff across all programme districts, after the census exercise was underway. This approach led to discontent among the district- and local-level government staff in the second phase as well, as they felt that they were being told to do things without being adequately consulted, and with little understanding being shown in regard to their constraints.

In communicating with VDCs and municipalities, DDCs also adopted a top-down approach, which resulted in a lack of ownership and understanding of the project. VDC/municipality officers largely had incomplete or incorrect information about the programme. This posed immense challenges for programme implementation on the ground since VDC secretaries were the key points of engagement with community members, who were often very displeased about delays in payments or about being excluded from the programme.

Coordination

The successful implementation of Phase 2 required effective coordination between UNICEF and DoCR, UNICEF and DDC, DDC and VDC/municipalities, and VDC/municipalities and beneficiaries. There were communication gaps between different stakeholders, which led to coordination problems between them. In addition, most respondents did not even understand fully why and how they would need to coordinate with anyone else.

Coordination between UNICEF field offices and DDC staff posed some challenges in Phase 2 since clusters formed for the post-disaster response were no longer active. Instead, DDC staff presided over various thematic committees, to which UNICEF was only invited occasionally. As a result, they were not always aware of other ongoing relief efforts in the district.

There was also room for improvement in regard to the communication and coordination within the UNICEF teams involved in implementing the ECTP, in terms of how different teams at the centre coordinated their activities, and in relation to their interactions with field offices.

Conclusions and recommendations

UNICEF was able to support approximately 430,000 beneficiaries in Phase 1 and over 300,000 beneficiaries during Phase 2 in meeting their basic needs through the ECTP as they recovered from the devastating earthquakes. It was thus one of the largest post-earthquake responses in the country. By developing a registry of all children under five years old and increasing birth registration rates from 48% to 94% in 11 programme districts in Phase 2, UNICEF Social Policy and Economic Analysis (SPEA) have laid the foundation for the universalisation of the child grant in the country, an explicit priority of the GoN. In addition, through the M&E systems utilised throughout implementation this programme has developed a comprehensive knowledge base as regards the practicalities of adapting social protection systems to respond to shocks. The use of government systems has also helped UNICEF gain trust of key stakeholders and beneficiaries.

Given its successes, the ECTP could be used effectively in the future, but its effectiveness would be improved significantly by following some of the recommendations at the system and programme levels, which are introduced here and discussed in greater detail in the chapters below. UNICEF should:

- Assess capacity for programme delivery at the systems and programme levels, and provide necessary support to ensure successful delivery.
- Prepare a contingency plan for turnover in personnel.
- Improve the census exercise by assessing and using existing data, communicating about the exercise, conducting a household based census, setting up a desk-based registration system, compiling an integrated list of children, and validating the data before programme roll-out.
- Delay programme roll out to address discrepancies and maximise impact.

- Implement an effective communication strategy that is multi-pronged, utilises effective local organisations, communicates all key information in a timely manner, repeats key messages, and tracks progress against communication plans.
- Develop an embedded evaluation plan.
- Develop a coherent M&E implementation plan and facilitate uptake of findings.

SRSP in Nepal

The role of social protection in humanitarian disasters

The use of cash transfers as a tool in the humanitarian aid response to shocks is becoming increasingly prevalent. Where markets are functioning, cash transfers allow people choice and flexibility in regard to meeting their needs, including as needs change from immediate relief from a crisis to recovery. Operationally, cash transfers offer an opportunity to improve the speed and efficiency of response, relative to in-kind aid, and may promote a move away from compartmentalised cluster-based response approaches. However, cash programming in emergencies is not a silver bullet and will not be feasible or appropriate everywhere. Not all needs following a shock can be addressed through a cash transfer and the effectiveness of a cash response depends on the availability of commodities and the condition of market access. Cash transfers may also generate new operational challenges, such as those relating to the coordination and financing of humanitarian aid.

UNICEF's vision for SRSP

In the aftermath of the 2015 Nepal earthquakes, UNICEF proposed that one of the fastest ways to respond at scale to the needs of the affected population would be to utilise the existing social protection system. The proposed idea was that, across the two phases of the ECTP intervention, UNICEF would, in the first phase, implement the vertical expansion of that system, and then, in a second phase, implement horizontal scale-up to new beneficiaries in order to meet the recovery needs of this new target population. The interventions were intended to support basic consumption during immediate relief and recovery phases, and to act as a catalyst to strengthen and expand the existing child grant programme. The ECTP was not envisaged as a replacement for comprehensive humanitarian action, but rather as one part of a plethora of interventions by a multitude of government and non-government actors.

This evaluation found that, broadly speaking, the ECTP provided proof of concept that the existing social protection system can be used as a tool to respond to emergencies. This is reflected by the formal incorporation of SRSP into the National Framework for Social Protection (NFSP). For SRSP to be realised, a variety of considerations now need to be made, including around the policy and legislative framework for social protection in Nepal, the institutional architecture for social protection, the supporting systems and operational processes, government awareness and buy-in, and the need for coordination at all levels of the system.

Policy and legislative framework

The legal basis for social protection in Nepal is already well established, under the 2015 Constitution and various acts. A draft social protection policy framework (the NFSP) sets the parameters for developing and coordinating social protection policies. It outlines the basic scope and direction for the sector, and proposes the creation of the institutional bodies that will be mandated to steer cross-ministerial decision-making and coordinate development partners, civil society, and the private sector.

A legislative basis for SRSP is thus in place and a policy framework is being developed. However, challenges remain, principally revolving around the issue of the coordination of actors and the question of what would constitute an appropriate financing mechanism for SRSP.

Institutional context

There are some institutional or political economy challenges that will need to be addressed in order to develop SRSP. The NFSP sets out to address the complex and fragmented social protection landscape by establishing institutional bodies which will have the mandate to steer and direct social protection policy and programming. However, a key challenge identified by all respondents to this research relates to coordination. Whether expanding vertically or horizontally, or piggybacking new programmes onto existing systems, coordination of actors is essential. There is now a need to elaborate a detailed proposal regarding the nature of the mechanism that will be used to coordinate between the institutions involved in SRSP; this mechanism must be designed in such a way that it links with the coordination systems for humanitarian action. The mechanism should also be linked to national early warning monitoring systems.

Operating systems

In order for a social protection system to be able to respond effectively and efficiently to covariate shocks, strong functioning operational systems are required. These systems must include functional processes for the registration, selection, and enrolment of beneficiaries, payments, case management, communications, and monitoring. Additionally, the social protection system must be linked with emergency surveillance systems so that it not only responds when needed but is also able to anticipate shocks and to prepare accordingly.

The ECTP implemented two types of expansion as a response to the 2015 earthquakes: vertical expansion in Phase 1 and horizontal expansion in Phase 2. The basic limitation of the vertical expansion was that not all earthquake-affected people were beneficiaries of the ECTP. The basic limitation of the horizontal expansion has been the immense challenges involved in registering and enrolling a new beneficiary population in the aftermath of a shock, when implementation capacity is already under strain. The attempt to get around these limitations underpins UNICEF's aim to strengthen and expand the child grant. If a universal child grant were operative at a national scale, it would considerably boost coverage of any shock-affected population in the case of vertical expansion, as a much higher proportion of the general population would be covered. At the time of writing, the GoN has agreed to implement a universal child grant with incremental geographic expansion, and the initial stage of an expansion plan has been approved by the Ministry of Finance (MoF).

Horizontal expansion represents a much more challenging form of shock response because a new beneficiary population has to be registered and enrolled. UNICEF's experience with Phase 2 of the ECTP highlighted these difficulties. In order to implement horizontal expansion quickly and efficiently one would need a database comprising a comprehensive registry of the whole population. This could then be used to select beneficiaries for a range of interventions, including social assistance cash transfer programmes in the event of shocks. In Nepal, the World Bank is currently investing in the creation of a social registry for just these purposes, including the enhancement of the civil registration system (which covers birth, death, migration, marriage and divorce) and linking civil registration with social assistance programmes. Building a social registry of this type is not a simple undertaking (there are inherent challenges around data quality and other issues), but the establishment of a comprehensive and semi-automated

registry would be of tremendous benefit to a social protection system that is geared to respond to shocks.

This research also revealed that work is needed on other dimensions of the social protection system. In relation to payments systems, disbursement of transfers to beneficiaries is largely done by hand. This imposes constraints in regard to the speed and efficiency with which cash transfers can be disbursed in times of shock. What is more, it is clear that the infrastructure for an electronic payments system is at a very nascent stage in Nepal. The UK Department for International Development (DFID) have initiated a programme to start developing access to financial services and electronic payments in the country, but there is a way to go before the conditions are ripe for this technology to be fully utilised.

It is also clear that the monitoring system for the current social assistance programmes requires investment in order to be made fit for purpose for SRSP. In addition, very few robust impact evaluations have been carried out of social assistance programmes in Nepal, and this gap is contributing to the inability to improve the performance of these programmes, together with widespread misperceptions and lack of knowledge about the purpose and effectiveness of social protection policy.

Government awareness about social protection

Despite rising levels of investment (in 2016 the GoN announced it would double the value of the social assistance grants) and the length of time some of these programmes have been operating, awareness about the value, aims, and objectives of social protection within GoN appears to be low. Social protection, and social assistance in particular, is largely viewed by government respondents as an obligation, a duty to support those in need or to repay older persons for the contributions to society and the economy made over their lifetimes, rather than as a profitable investment in human capital development and support to aggregate demand in the domestic economy. Many government stakeholders also expounded a familiar set of worries around misuse of cash transfers by beneficiaries, and noted social assistance as a cause of dependency. There was a sense among respondents that social assistance negatively impacted production, and created significant liabilities that are difficult to roll-back. These perceptions largely run counter the great mass of evidence around social protection globally.

Coordination

Coordination at all levels was identified as crucial for SRSP. At the national level, the NFSP proposes a coordinating body, but there is a lack of detail in the draft strategy as to the precise functions and relations of this body with key institutions. At the sub-national level, there is a need to coordinate programme implementing staff in times of emergency, whether they be government or non-government.

Despite the many challenges associated with effective coordination, there is cause for optimism because the conditions for coordination are currently good: diverse stakeholders noted that the ECTP has provided proof of concept, and the interest of GoN in social assistance appears high. This positive disposition is embodied in the government's commitment to gradually scaling up a universal child grant nationally, even if financial commitments aren't yet adequate and social protection is not always well understood or supported by government actors.

Conclusions and recommendations

The experience of the ECTP has shown that regular social protection systems in Nepal can be used as an effective mechanism to respond to shocks, as part of a broader comprehensive immediate and recovery response package. That said, utilising the social protection system to

respond to shocks involves a trade-off with regard to some of the key criteria underpinning humanitarian response, such as timeliness, coverage of the affected population, and the adequacy of the support provided. Mitigating the extent to which this is the case requires a legislative framework and institutional architecture that is built for purpose: that is, fully in line with a vision for SRSP. SRSP also requires a funding mechanism to which multiple donors can contribute. The system infrastructure needs to be similarly tailored. In particular, it needs to be underpinned by a functioning civil registrations system and a programme MIS, both of which must be able to speak to each other – for instance via a social or single registry. Additional resources will also be required, not only to fund scale-up but also to finance the implementation of SRSP. This must be costed and budgeted in advance.

The building of SRSP in Nepal is thus a long-term vision, requiring development investment in policy and legislation, institutional architecture, communications and financial services infrastructure and research; as well as technical and administrative capacity on the part of implementing agencies.

As a result, this report makes a number of recommendations to UNICEF based on the evidence and findings from this study. The evaluation team acknowledges that it might not be feasible for UNICEF to address all these recommendations on their own, but nonetheless recommends these actions as potential areas for consideration not only for UNICEF but also for the government as well as development partners interested in bolstering a shock responsive social protection system. In any case, UNICEF could:

- Support the finalisation of NFSP and the creation of a new institutional architecture as proposed in the final agreed framework.
- Support the new NFSP institutional architecture with a medium- to long-term technical assistance package
- Support the development of linkages between social protection and early warning systems and disaster risk management in the country.
- Continue to support the Social Protection Task Team (SPTT), and should take a leading role in facilitating coordination regarding the social protection and SRSP research agenda and cross-sector advocacy.
- Support the development of an appropriate financing mechanism for SRSP.

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List of tables and figures

List of abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CaLP	Cash Learning Partnership
CCC	Core Commitments for Children
CCG	Cash Coordination Group
CDO	Chief District Officer
CTP	Cash transfer programme
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DDC	District Development Committee
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DFP	District focal person
DoCR	Department of Civil Registration
DRM	Disaster risk management
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
ECTP	Emergency Cash Transfer Programme
EU	European Union
FACE	Fund Authorisation and Certification of Expenditure
FGD	Focus group discussion
GDP	Gross domestic product
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GoN	Government of Nepal
HPI	Human Poverty Index
ICIMOD	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KII	Key informant interview
LGCDP	Local Governance and Community Development Programme
LDO	Local Development Officer
MIRAs	Multi-cluster initial rapid assessments
MIS	Management information system

MoAD	Ministry of Agricultural Development
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoFALD	Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MoLE	Ministry of Labour and Employment
MoWCSW	Ministry of Women, Children, and Social Welfare
NeKSAP	Nepal Food Security Surveillance System
NEPAN	Nepal Participatory Action Network
NFSP	National Framework for Social Protection
NLSS	Nepal Living Standards Survey
NPC	National Planning Commission
NPR	Nepali Rupees
NRA	National Reconstruction Authority
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN)
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OPM	Oxford Policy Management
PAD	Project appraisal document
PDM	Post-distribution monitoring
PHD	Population Health and Development
PMDRF	Prime Minister's Disaster Relief Fund
PMT	Proxy means testing
SRSP	Shock-responsive social protection
SOPs	Standard operating procedures
SPDCC	Social Protection District Coordination Committee
SPPCC	Social Protection Policy Coordination Committee
SPEA	Social Policy and Economic Analysis

SPWC	Social Protection Working Committee
SPTT	Social Protection Task Team
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNGA	UN General Assembly
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	US Agency for International Development
VDC	Village Development Committee
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WCF	Ward Citizens' Forum
WFP	World Food Programme

1 Introduction

OPM has been contracted by UNICEF to undertake an independent evaluation of their ECTP. The ECTP was part of a large-scale, variform response to the earthquakes of April and May 2015, for which UNICEF provided financial and technical support to the GoN. The ECTP was delivered over two phases: Phase 1 was part of the emergency response and Phase 2 was part of the recovery response. Phase 1 of the programme provided a top-up grant to the beneficiaries of the existing GoN cash transfers to five vulnerable groups, namely Dalit children under five years of age, widows and single women, persons with disabilities, senior citizens, and members of minority ethnic groups in 19 earthquake-affected districts. The second phase of the programme comprised a horizontal expansion of the programme, providing cash transfers to all children under five years of age in 11 of the 14 most earthquake-affected districts. UNICEF's financial support to the GoN for both phases of the cash programme amounted to $26 million.

The explicit objectives of the evaluation are to assess the success of the programme in relation to the short-term relief and recovery needs of the target groups after the earthquakes, as well as in relation to the wider humanitarian response in general. In addition, the evaluation consolidates learning from the use of social protection systems in an emergency response context to inform the future use of such approaches in Nepal and globally. The evaluation findings will also inform UNICEF regarding how to further support its longer-term objectives in Nepal, including the expansion of the child grant and the strengthening of social protection systems.

This report has drawn on qualitative primary data collection and secondary quantitative datasets. Our primary respondents included officials from concerned national and international institutions, such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the DoCR, DFID, the MoF, the National Planning Commission (NPC), NEPAN, PHD, UNICEF, and the World Bank. In order to contextualise the information from the perspective of beneficiaries and implementers at the district level we carried out fieldwork with beneficiaries, non-beneficiaries, and regional and local officials in a sample of programme districts and communities.

1.1 Context

In 2015, 344 naturally-triggered disasters were reported worldwide, which claimed the lives of over 23,000 victims.[3] The Nepal earthquakes contributed one-third of these victims: 8,831 people died as a result of the two earthquakes on 25 April and 12 May 2015 and their subsequent aftershocks.[4] The magnitude of recent natural disasters, and their contribution to total global deaths, indicates the importance of the need for adequate emergency responses. A recent International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) paper states that 'exposure of people and assets in both higher- and lower-income countries has increased faster than vulnerability has decreased, thus generating new risk and an increase in socio-economic losses'.[5] Another recent economics paper from the University of Oxford provides a case study and a literature review which discuss how increased household vulnerability from earthquakes influences local labour markets in low-income countries.[6] In Nepal, over 5.6 million people have been affected by the earthquakes, with household physical

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[3] CRED EM-DAT database (2015) www.emdat.be/.
[4] Ibid.
[5] UN General Assembly (UNGA) (2014) 'Implementation of the international strategy for disaster reduction'. Presented at the 69th session of the UN General Assembly on sustainable development.
[6] Kirchberger, M. (2014) 'Natural disasters and labour markets'. Centre for the Study of African Economies, University of Oxford.

assets often partially or completely destroyed, leaving a lot of Nepalese households vulnerable to being forced to adopt coping strategies to account for depleted assets.[7]

Poor households often suffer disproportionately in the face of natural disasters, as they lack the resources, and often the networks and reserves, to allow them to cope at a time of crisis. In response to these household vulnerabilities following a natural shock, particularly as they affect poor people, especially in low- and middle-income countries, there has been a shift in thinking among many actors about how to link emergency response to long-term assistance.[8] This reflects a change in perspective from the effort to address only urgent and immediate needs to a consideration of how such needs will affect the longer-term recovery and growth of economies and household resilience.[9] Rather than actors focusing solely on replenishing household assets, the current change in thinking also concerns how both national and foreign aid resources can be allocated to promote development, build household resilience, and strengthen local economies. There is a need to produce cross-fertilisation across the social protection, disaster risk management (DRM), and humanitarian sectors. Social assistance is one approach to addressing the vulnerabilities resulting from natural disasters. *Doing Cash Differently,* an Overseas Development Institute (ODI) report, recommends linking humanitarian assistance with long-term assistance aimed at reducing vulnerability and poverty.[10] The report further argues that cash can be delivered quickly by leveraging payment mechanisms through private sector delivery of social assistance using banking facilities. Delivery of social assistance in emergency contexts could provide an opportunity to build a linkage to traditional social and economic development that could capitalise on existing government infrastructure for emergency response at a larger scale.

1.1.1 Social protection in Nepal

The GoN implements multiple social protection schemes, such as social insurance, social assistance, and labour market programmes, to help households cope with various risks and vulnerabilities. Social protection in Nepal has expanded since the introduction of social pensions in 1995, and now there are several active cash-based social security schemes (Table 1). The history of social transfer allowance dates back to 1995, when social pensions were introduced for the elderly.[11] More beneficiaries have since been added to the programme, with the GoN now providing allowances to five vulnerable groups (discussed above). The government expenditure on social assistance schemes has reached about 3.2% of its total expenditure.[12] Nepal is increasingly putting more emphasis on social protection schemes, as evidenced by the doubling of the social security amount for senior citizens, widows, disabled people, and people from minority ethnic groups.[13]

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[7] CRED EM-DAT database (2015) www.emdat.be/; International Labour Organization (ILO) (2015) 'Nepal earthquake April 2015: Preliminary employment impact assessment'.
[8] OPM (2015) 'Shock-Responsive Social Protection Systems, Literature Review'.
[9] Farrington J, Harvey P, Slater R., 2005. 'Cash transfers in the context of pro-poor growth'; Osman, M., 2011. 'In-kind donations: Who benefits?' Humanitarian Practice Network.
[10] ODI (2015) 'Doing Cash Differently: How Cash Transfers can Transform Humanitarian Aid'.
[11] Khanal, Dilli Raj (2012) 'Social Security/ Social Protection in Nepal: Situation Analysis'. ILO.
[12] MoF (2015) Budget Speech for FY 2016/17, presented to the Legislative Parliament of Nepal.
[13] MoF (2015) Budget Speech for FY 2016/17, presented to the Legislative Parliament of Nepal.

Table 1:   Cash-based social security schemes in Nepal

Social assistance scheme	Eligibility criteria	Value of grant	Inception year
Senior citizens' allowance	All citizens 70 years old and above; 60 years and above for Dalits and people living in Karnali districts	NPR 1,000 per month. Increased to NPR 2,000 per month from September 2016[14]	1995
Disability allowance	All 'fully disabled' and 'partially disabled' people	NPR 300 per month for 'partially disabled' and NPR 1,000 for 'fully disabled'. Increased to NPR 600/month and NPR 2,000/month from September 2016	1996
Single women's allowance	All single women who are 60 years old and above; and all women who were married and are now widowed or separated receive this allowance until they reach pensionable age	NPR 500 per month. Increased to NPR 1,000/month from September 2016	1996
Child grant	All Dalit children under the age of five years; all children under five years of age in the Karnali region. The support is provided for up to two children per mother	NPR 200 per month per child up to a maximum of two children per mother. Increased to NPR 400/month from September 2016	2009
Endangered indigenous people's allowance	Endangered indigenous people (10 groups identified as the worst off and most threatened of Nepal's 59 indigenous groups with populations of fewer than 1,000 people)	NPR 1,000 /month. Increased to 2,000/month from September 2016	2009
Scholarships	Multiple scholarships exist at primary, secondary and higher levels of education. Also, special scholarships for students with disabilities, students from highly marginalised groups and students from remote mountain districts	Multiple: ranges from NPR 400 per year for girls at primary level to NPR 15,000 per year for certain students with disabilities	1955
Aama Programme (Mothers' Programme)	Pregnant women who opt for child birth in medical institutions	One-off payment of NPR 500 in Terai, 1,000 Hill and NPR 1,500 in mountain districts	2005

Source: Modified from Upreti et al. (2012). 'Livelihoods, basic services and social protection in Nepal', working paper 7, Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium, ODI, UK. DoCR, 2016.[15]

The social protection programmes in Nepal are broadly structured around addressing vulnerabilities across the life-cycle of individuals, but they also include provisions for particular ethnic groups that have been designated as vulnerable. Such an approach is expected to minimise life-cycle vulnerabilities, such as child malnutrition and poverty in old age. The social assistance

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[14] The increase is applicable for citizens aged above 70 only.
[15] www.docr.gov.np/?q=en/node/325.

cash transfers are resourced from the government budget, and are expected to contribute to reducing poverty, vulnerability, and social exclusion, as well as preventing households from adopting harmful coping strategies, such as selling assets or involving children in labour. Nepal's social protection schemes are not targeted expressly towards poor households but rely on categorical targeting to identify particular groups deemed to be vulnerable. These programmes fall under the broad domain of social protection, and are delivered by various ministries, such as the Ministry of Agricultural Development (MoAD), the Ministry of Education (MoE), and MoFALD.

The GoN, with support from development partners, is now attempting to strengthen systems and build institutional capacity relating to social assistance processes, including registration, communications, payment systems, case management and grievance redressal mechanisms, and social accountability. They are also considering including Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) elements, such as introducing an early warning system to prepare for disaster. There are ambitions to link social protection systems with livelihood support programmes, such as skills training, and agricultural support services, such as crop and livestock insurance.

1.1.2   The earthquake response in Nepal

Initial response

Several actors have been involved in the relief, rescue, and reconstruction work in the aftermath of the earthquakes in Nepal. These actors include governments, bilateral and multilateral organisations, charity organisations, civil society organisations, security services, businesses, politicians, and individuals. An assessment of the overall response to the earthquakes in Nepal is complicated, as competing interpretations have been expressed by different stakeholders and interest groups.

According to GoN sources, the government was able to respond quickly to a natural disaster of this magnitude because some elements within the government, such as the police and the army, were prepared to be mobilised at short notice under distressing circumstances.[16] For instance, the meeting of the Central Disaster Relief Committee was held within two hours of the earthquake. The GoN's National Disaster Response Framework (NDRF) served as the key tool in coordinating response to the earthquake. The GoN activated cluster mechanisms, and made an appeal for help to the international community for rescue and relief.[17] A UN flash appeal was also made for a sum of $422 million, to meet critical human needs.[18]

A total of 134 teams from 34 countries were active during the initial phase of rescue and relief work. The initial response focused on search operations. The focus in the initial days of the earthquake was on providing in-kind support to earthquake victims, and the GoN and donor organisations were involved with this. The emphasis of this work was on providing shelter, debris-clearing materials and medicine so as to curb the spread of diseases, which is a common occurrence after a disaster of this scale. Most of this distribution focused on tarpaulins, corrugated metal sheet, blankets, mosquito nets, buckets, sleeping mats, kitchen equipment and food (rice and lentils).[19] Similarly, the clearing materials included shovels, pickaxes, wheelbarrows, helmets, gloves and face masks. Finally, the medical assistance included the provision of chlorine production modules and trauma medics.[20] Thus, in the first two months, aid largely focused on

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[16] NPC (2015) 'Nepal Earthquake 2015, Post Disaster Needs Assessment, Volume A: Key Findings'.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Government of UK (2015) 'Nepal Earthquake, UK Aid Response'. www.gov.uk/government/news/nepal-earthquake-uk-aid-response; Asia Foundation (2015) 'Aid and Recovery in Post-Earthquake Nepal IRM-1'.

emergency relief. Moreover, there was an emphasis on constructing temporary shelters, given the coming monsoon season. [21]

In addition to the in-kind distribution, the GoN also coordinated the distribution of food and non-food items. Personnel from the Nepal Army and Police were mobilised across the country for rescue, relief, and coordination activities. They were considered to have responded particularly effectively.[22] A total of 4,236 helicopter flights were used to rescue earthquake victims.

Despite these efforts, there were several challenges with regard to the distribution of relief materials to earthquake victims. Nepal's difficult physical terrain posed challenges in reaching remote places. There were also threats of landslides, as the country experienced several aftershocks. There were also logistical difficulties, such as in regard to procuring relief materials on such a large scale and transporting them to remote affected areas. Finally, there were capacity constraints at all levels in regard to dealing with a disaster of this scale. Many villages had no access to roads, which had a detrimental effect on relief and rescue work. As a result, many donors provided several relief packages to villages that had access to roads, while remote villages without road access continued to suffer. This led to the GoN stepping in and making it compulsory for donors to consult the government while distributing relief packages.[23] Fulfilling a coordination function, the GoN emphasised the equal distribution of resources to all affected households.[24] This arrangement also enabled the GoN to track the distribution of relief materials relatively easily.

At the same time, numerous national and international media outlets and organisations have noted that the speed of the response as regards supporting earthquake victims was slow. [25] The political turmoil in the country has not helped the earthquake response. Nepal has already had three changes in government since the earthquakes, with three different prime ministers leading the country during that time.

The aftermath of the earthquakes provided a political climate in which the leading political parties could come together to finalise and endorse a long-delayed constitution, which took place on 20 September 2015.[26] The timing of this action took away attention from the immediate plight of the earthquake victims, as the new constitution was not accepted as inclusive and equitable by some parts of the society. Numerous mass demonstrations and protests followed. These protests affected the populace in general and earthquake victims in particular. Most notably, a combination of dissatisfied protestors in the southern plains bordering India and the complex bilateral relationships between Nepal and India resulted in an economic blockade at the southern borders from September 2015 to February 2016. The flow of goods from India was severely restricted during this time, leading to serious shortages of fuel, medicine, and construction materials.[27] Energy disruptions ensued (with power cuts lasting up to 18 hours a day), schools were closed, and transportation links were severely undermined, heightening tensions and placing an undue burden on key stakeholders involved with post-earthquake work at all levels.[28] The national crisis

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[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Asia Foundation (2016) 'Aid and Recovery in Post-Earthquake Nepal IRM-1; Qualitative Field Monitoring'. http://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/AWAidandRecoveryQualitativeFieldMonitoring.pdf
[25] New York Times (2017) 'Nepal Removes Leader of Post-Quake Rebuilding Effort'.
[26] Kathmandu Post (2015) http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/news/2015-09-20/people-celebrate-constitution-promulgation-in-photos.html
[27] Time (2016) 'Why Nepal is Still in Rubble after a Devastating Quake'. http://time.com/4305225/nepal-earthquake-anniversary-disaster/.
[28] Time (2016) 'No Respite for Shortage-Hit Nepal as Political Efforts Fall Short'. http://time.com/4192129/shortage-nepal-madhesi-blockade/.

was particularly severe for earthquake victims, who were already suffering from the low levels of reconstruction efforts and limited spending capacity of the government.

The changes in the fortunes of political parties also had a significant impact on the bureaucratic apparatus responsible for post-earthquake reconstruction and rehabilitation. The NPC had been active in leading the response, notably through the preparation of the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA, see below), but the executive committee resigned when the government changed in October 2015. Subsequent government changes have created uncertainty and have led to the reassignment of numerous administrators, bureaucrats, and planning officers at all levels. Even the Chief Executive Officer of the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA, see below), tasked with responsibility for ensuring effective reconstruction in the country, changed twice in the last year, with the former CEO having to leave office in October 2015,[29] a new CEO being appointed in December 2015 after a change in government, and then the first CEO being reappointed again with the next change of government in August 2016.[30] The political instability has thus had a significant impact on post-earthquake efforts, with victims suffering directly as a result of the uncertainty and related inaction.

Institutional approach

Within the first two months after the first earthquake the GoN produced a PDNA document stating its objective of identifying areas to be rebuilt, following the principle of 'building back better'. A globally accepted methodology was adopted for assessing the impact of the earthquakes. Quantitative as well as qualitative information was collected to assess the damage, and several stakeholders were consulted. Led by the NPC, the process commenced in May 2015 and was completed by June 2015. The outcome of the exercise was documented on a sectoral basis, focusing on the social sector, the productive sector, the infrastructure sector, and cross-cutting sectors. The expected total cost to rebuild these sectors is $7.1 billion. As such, the total damage caused by the earthquakes was estimated to be around one-third of Nepal's annual GDP. In addition, the earthquake affected Nepal's aspirations to move to a higher trajectory of growth, and the government's revenue collection target was not met. Around 2.4% to 3.5% of people fell into poverty, with the earthquakes affecting poor people and people from rural areas more.[31]

The GoN set up the NRA in December 2015 to lead and manage earthquake recovery and reconstruction in Nepal. Through the National Reconstruction Fund, the NRA was tasked with collecting $2 billion for reconstruction, and was allocated $200 million as seed money. The PDNA document was instrumental in Nepal receiving pledges at the International Conference on Nepal's Reconstruction 2015, held on 25 June 2015 in Kathmandu. Nepal received pledges totalling $4.1 billion from various foreign governments and international organisations.[32] This was twice the target set by the GoN. Out of $4.1 billion, $1.97 billion was to be provided as grants and the remaining amount was to be provided in the form of loans.[33]

In the recovery and reconstruction phases, some of the key partners have been the World Bank, the ADB, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the European Union (EU), DFID, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

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[29] Scroll.in (2017) https://scroll.in/article/807172/in-photos-a-year-on-nepals-quake-survivors-are-still-homeless.
[30] Rising Nepal (2016) http://therisingnepal.org.np/news/1343.
[31] NPC (2015) 'Nepal Earthquake 2015, Post Disaster Needs Assessment, Volume A: Key Findings'.
[32] New York Times (2017).
www.nytimes.com/2017/01/11/world/asia/nepal-removes-leader-of-post-earthquake-rebuilding-effort.html
[33] UNDP (2015) www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/our-projects-and-initiatives/NepalQuake.html

The primary focus of the World Bank has been providing grants to poor households seeking to reconstruct their houses. The aim of the housing grant is to build 55,000 houses in rural areas. The estimated expenditure is $200 million. The World Bank also provided $100 million as a budget support to meet the country's short-term financial needs and to help in recovery and relief efforts. The World Bank has also allocated a significant amount in the areas of repair of damaged roads, irrigation and drinking water schemes; the expansion of vocational training in areas related to post-earthquake recovery; as well as health care, nutrition and livelihood support in the poorest, through restricting its current projects.[34] The focus of the ADB has been on rebuilding and restoring roads, schools and public buildings. The ADB has also provided budget support for enhancing rural finance and reducing poverty.[35] Similarly, JICA has focused on the construction of houses, schools and hospitals.[36] DFID is involved with reconstruction work, and the enhancement of the livelihoods of earthquake victims.[37] UNDP is involved with enhancing people's livelihoods through programmes such as a cash-for-work programme. It is also supporting recovery planning and coordination, is strengthening the NRA, governance and public service delivery, and is involved in DRR and disaster resilience-building.[38] USAID has been supporting the GoN in reconstruction activities by providing training and technical assistance for construction professionals and homeowners in regard to building earthquake-resilient houses. USAID also contributed to the Multi-Donor Trust Fund.[39]

Table 2 below provides a snapshot of some of the key development partners, and their contributions in the aftermath of the earthquakes. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list, but helps to present an overview of the nature, kind, and degree of activities that have taken place in Nepal since April 2015.

Table 2:   Donor contribution

Development partner	Activities in response to earthquake	Estimated value[40]
Action Aid	Cash transfer, poverty alleviation	$3 million
ACTED	Cash transfer	
ADB	Rebuilding and restoring schools, roads, schools and public buildings, rural finance, poverty reduction, relief programme	$583 million[41]
Australia	Enterprise development, livelihoods support	$16 million
Austria	Pledge	$1.2 million
Canada	Pledge	$60 million
China	Targeted cash assistance, emergency relief, medical supplies, DRM	$500 million
DanChurchAid	Cash transfer	
DFID	Vital health services, logistical support, delivering aid to isolated places, providing helicopters, reconstruction, search and rescue responders	

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[34] World Bank (2016) 'Fact Sheet: What the World Bank Group is doing in Nepal after the Earthquakes'. Washington DC: United States of America.
[35] ADB (2015) 'News Release: ADB offers $600 million Assistance to Help Nepal Rebuild after Earthquake'.
[36] JICA (2016) 'Press Release: JICA seamless assistance for earthquake recovery and reconstruction.'
[37] DFID (2015) 'News Story: Nepal Earthquake: UK aid response'.
[38] UNDP (2016) 'Our projects and initiatives'.
[39] USAID (2016) www.usaid.gov/nepal/fact-sheets/usaid-post-earthquake-contributions-housing-reconstruction.
[40] Investment Board of Nepal (2015) 'IBN Dispatch Monthly Newsletter June 2015'. http://ibn.gov.np/uploads/files/Working%20Classification/newsletters/IBN%20Dispatch%205.pdf.
[41] ADB (2015) 'News Release: ADB offers $600 million Assistance to Help Nepal Rebuild after Earthquake'.

Development partner	Activities in response to earthquake	Estimated value[40]
EU	Emergency shelter, clean water, medicine, and telecommunications	€100 million[42]
Finland	Support through World Health Organisation and UNICEF	
HelpAge	Unconditional cash transfer	
ILO	Cash transfer	
India	Pledge	$1 billion
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies	Cash transfer	
International Organisation for Migration	Cash transfer	
Japan	Comprehensive DRM programme, LGCDP, skills development, housing	$260 million
JICA	Tents, blankets and schools construction	
Lumanti	Cash transfer	
Lutheran World Federation	Cash transfer	
Mercy Corps	Cash transfer	
Norway	School reconstruction	$30 million
Oxfam	Cash transfer, emergency response	$37 million
Pakistan	Pledge	$10 million
Plan International	Cash transfer	
Red Cross	Cash transfer	
Save the Children	Cash transfer, earthquake response	$20 million
South Korea	Pledge	$10 million
Switzerland	Pledge	$25 million
Tearfund	Cash transfer	
The Leprosy Mission Nepal	Cash transfer	
The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation	Rescue and reconstruction work, chlorine production modules, livelihoods support, skills training	$1 million
UK	Pledge	$110 million
UNDP	Cash transfer, clean water, LGCDP[43], 'Build Back Better' for Inclusive and Resilient Recovery, Livelihood Recovery for Peace Project	$3.5 million[44]

[42] IBN (2015) 'IBN Dispatch Monthly Newsletter June 2015'.
http://ibn.gov.np/uploads/files/Working%20Classification/newsletters/IBN%20Dispatch%205.pdf.
[43] Local Governance and Community Development Programme.
[44] MoF (2016) 'Aid Platform Report',
http://amis.mof.gov.np/TEMPLATE/ampTemplate/saikuui/index.html#report/open/3932.

Development partner	Activities in response to earthquake	Estimated value[40]
UNICEF	Unconditional cash transfer, in-kind transfer, providing safe water, constructing tent hospitals and temporary learning centres, measles vaccination; child protection	$58.5 million[45]
USA	Pledge	$130 million
USAID	Health, housing reconstruction, communication	$40 million
WFP	Restoring food and nutrition security and building resilient, emergency food assistance	$33.8 million
World Bank	Housing construction, rural finance, training, health care, livelihood support, nutrition, and repairing damaged road and irrigation facilities	$450 million[46]

Move to cash

In the later days of the earthquake response, cash transfers to earthquake victims became prominent. Cash was crucial in providing shelter to, and meeting the other basic needs of, earthquake victims. This seems to reflect the priority needs of victims. According to quantitative research conducted by the Asia Foundation, more than two-thirds of victims identified cash as an immediate need.[47] The government announced a series of cash transfers in the aftermath of the earthquakes. Families received NPR 40,000 per death to cover cremation costs. The government also provided NPR 100,000 per family if there was a death in the family. The government also provided NPR 5,000 to families whose houses had been completely damaged and NPR 3,000 to families whose houses had been partially damaged, to help them build temporary shelters.[48] The government also paid for the treatment of injured people. Towards the end of 2015, the government provided a further cash grant of NPR 10,000 per family as part of a winter relief package: according to the Ministry of Home Affairs, as many as 302,266 families of earthquake victims, from 21 districts, had benefitted from the programme by January 2016.[49]

The GoN also provided cash to earthquake victims under the Local Governance and Community Development Programme (LGCDP). The amount varied by districts and VDCs, ranging from NPR 200,000 to NPR 900,000 per VDC. The amount was distributed in 11 of the most earthquake-affected districts immediately after the first earthquake in April. The decision on the use of this cash rested with the VDCs, and they mainly used these funds to purchase and transport food materials into the VDCs.[50]

As discussed earlier, the government also introduced a cash-based reconstruction grant to help earthquake victims. The government employed engineers to determine the extent of structural damage to homes in affected areas, and pledged to provide up to NPR 200,000 to those victims whose homes had been completely damaged. (This amount has recently been increased to NPR 300,000).[51] The government's disbursement mechanism involves releasing the funds directly into the bank account of identified and approved earthquake victims. This disbursement is being carried

[45] MoF (2016) 'Aid Platform Report', http://amis.mof.gov.np/TEMPLATE/ampTemplate/saikuui/index.html#report/open/3932.
[46] World Bank (2016) 'Fact Sheet: What the World Bank Group is doing in Nepal after the Earthquakes'. Washington DC: United States of America.
[47] Asia Foundation (2016) 'Aid and Recovery in Post-Earthquake Nepal IRM-2; quantitative survey'.
[48] European Commission (2015) 'Nepal Earthquake: The EU's Emergency relief – press release'.
[49] https://thehimalayantimes.com/kathmandu/distribution-of-winter-cash-relief-to-quake-victims-on/.
[50] Asia Foundation, 2015. 'Aid and Recovery in Post-Earthquake Nepal IRM-1'.
[51] Kathmandu Post (2016) http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/printedition/news/2016-09-06/govt-prepares-to-up-housing-grant.html. September 2016.

out in tranches, and at the time of writing the first tranche, worth NPR 50,000, has been received by most victims in the 11 most affected districts.[52] The release of the second tranche, which has not happened yet, is dependent on recipient victims constructing their houses to the plinth level.

The GoN requested individuals make contributions to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund, and a large number of donors, governments, and individuals deposited money into this fund.[53] According to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund website, a total of 1,753 individuals, organisations and countries deposited money for relief work. The total amount collected was around NPR 6.9 billion. The GoN committed to being transparent, and it made assurances that the funds would be used for the intended purpose. For instance, according to the regulations, the Fund cannot be used to provide allowances to government officials.[54]

The number of people receiving cash declined significantly as the rescue and relief work progressed.[55] Similarly, there was a decline in the distribution of tarpaulins and food. The less severely affected districts started to receive attention after June 2015.[56]

Many organisations were involved in cash transfers to beneficiaries at various stages. Some of the major organisations involved in cash transfers include UNICEF, HelpAge, International Organisation for Migration (IOM), ACTED, Lutheran World Federation, Plan International, Mercy Corps, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Save the Children, Oxfam, UNDP, the ILO, Action Aid, the ADB, the EU, DFID and JICA. The cash distribution mostly took place in 14 of the most earthquake-affected districts of Nepal.[57]

Although Nepal has received a substantial amount of money, the country is still struggling to rebuild nearly two years after the earthquakes.[58] The earthquake reconstruction process has been very slow, and many earthquake victims are still living in temporary shelters. Although the victims in 11 of the most earthquake-affected districts have received the first instalment of the housing grant, there have been many complaints by earthquake victims that they have not received the housing grant. Even among those who have received the grant, not all victims have started to build houses. According to a report published by the Asia Foundation, borrowing remains the main coping mechanism for households, and some of this grant is expected to go towards repayment of loans.[59] Furthermore, victims from the other affected districts have not yet received even the first instalment. The unilateral decision of the government to increase the grant from NPR 200,000 to NPR 300,000 in August 2016 has complicated relationships with donors, as they were not consulted on the increase.

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[52] We noted during our fieldwork that some of this money was being disbursed during our fieldwork, immediately before the Dashain festival, the biggest religious (Hindu) festival in Nepal. There is a danger that this unfortunate timing of disbursement could mean that some victims might use the funds to meet their immediate needs rather than invest them in reconstruction.
[53] In fact, the government went further, declaring that funds sent from outside the country to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) created solely for earthquake relief would be re-routed to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund. Although organisations that registered with the government before the earthquakes were free to receive funds, extensive rumours about the implications of this rule affected both registered and unregistered organisations in their efforts to carry out relief work in the immediate aftermath of the earthquakes. See, for instance, Nepali Times, 2015. (www.nepalitimes.com/blogs/thebrief/2015/05/02/real-story-on-pm-relief-fund/).
[54] Prime Minister's Relief Fund. http://pmrelief.opmcm.gov.np/.
[55] Asia Foundation (2015) 'Aid and Recovery in Post-Earthquake Nepal IRM-1'.
[56] Asia foundation (2016) 'Aid and Recovery in Post-Earthquake Nepal IRM-2; qualitative monitoring'.
[57] Ibid.
[58] New York Times (2017) 'Nepal Removes Leader of Post-Quake Rebuilding Effort'.
[59] Asia Foundation (2015) 'Aid and Recovery in Post-Earthquake Nepal IRM-1'.

1.1.3 State of the debate: How social assistance can contribute to emergency response

The ECTP stems from UNICEF's interest in exploring the potential linkages between routine social protection systems and humanitarian action in responding to shocks, which may be either natural or economic. This effort aligns with the global research agenda that has been coalescing around these issues over the last decade, drawing on the disciplines of social protection, DRM, climate change adaptation, resilience-building, and humanitarian response. This agenda was an explicit objective in Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki-Moon's Report for the World Humanitarian Summit, released in February 2016.[60]

One aim of the integration or closer coordination of social protection and emergency response is to improve the speed of response in the event of a shock. The existence of a well-defined list of potential beneficiaries and activation of a pre-existing support mechanism could minimise teething problems and decrease set-up time. The use of social assistance programmes, such as those for young children, pensioners, and people with disabilities, should also, in the long run, improve the response cost-efficiency by avoiding the duplication of administrative systems and reducing overlap between agencies responding to a crisis. When accompanied by a shift away from *post-hoc* crisis alleviation towards preparedness, early warning, and the mitigation of risk, investment in the social assistance system provides an opportunity for substantial later savings in humanitarian responses.

However, social protection systems may have conflicting objectives, target populations, and operational processes to those of humanitarian interventions, which could impede their ability to play the role of accommodating additional demand for assistance in an emergency. Not all households severely affected by an earthquake, for example, will necessarily contain one of the categories of the population targeted by the current social assistance programmes, so there may be a need to integrate households with new needs into the system that is intended to support households that are in chronic poverty or otherwise vulnerable.[61] There might be a need to develop an integrated social security system that can work around the life-cycle of an individual, both during emergencies and in regular times.

A recent framework for adapting social protection systems for emergencies developed by OPM and ODI identifies five possible modes of adaptive response:[62]

- **vertical expansion** (increasing the value, number, or duration of payments for an existing programme);
- **horizontal expansion** (adding new beneficiaries to a programme, including extending geographical coverage, extraordinary enrolment, modification of entitlements or conditions);
- **piggybacking** (utilising a social protection programme's existing administrative infrastructure for delivery of a separate programme);
- **shadow alignment** (developing a parallel humanitarian system that aligns as best as possible with a current or possible future social protection programme); and
- **Refocusing** (adjusting the social protection system to refocus assistance on groups most vulnerable to the shock).

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[60] Report of the Secretary General for the World Humanitarian Summit 2016. https://consultations.worldhumanitariansummit.org/bitcache/e49881ca33e3740b5f37162857cedc92c7c1e354?vid=569103&disposition=inline&op=view.
[61] See OPM (2015) 'Shock-Responsive Social Protection Systems: A research programme for DFID', Literature Review. See also, OPM (2016) 'Shock-Responsive Social Protection Systems: A research programme for DFID Working paper 1: Conceptualising Shock-Responsive Social Protection'.
[62] Ibid.

Figure 1:   Typology of SRSP systems
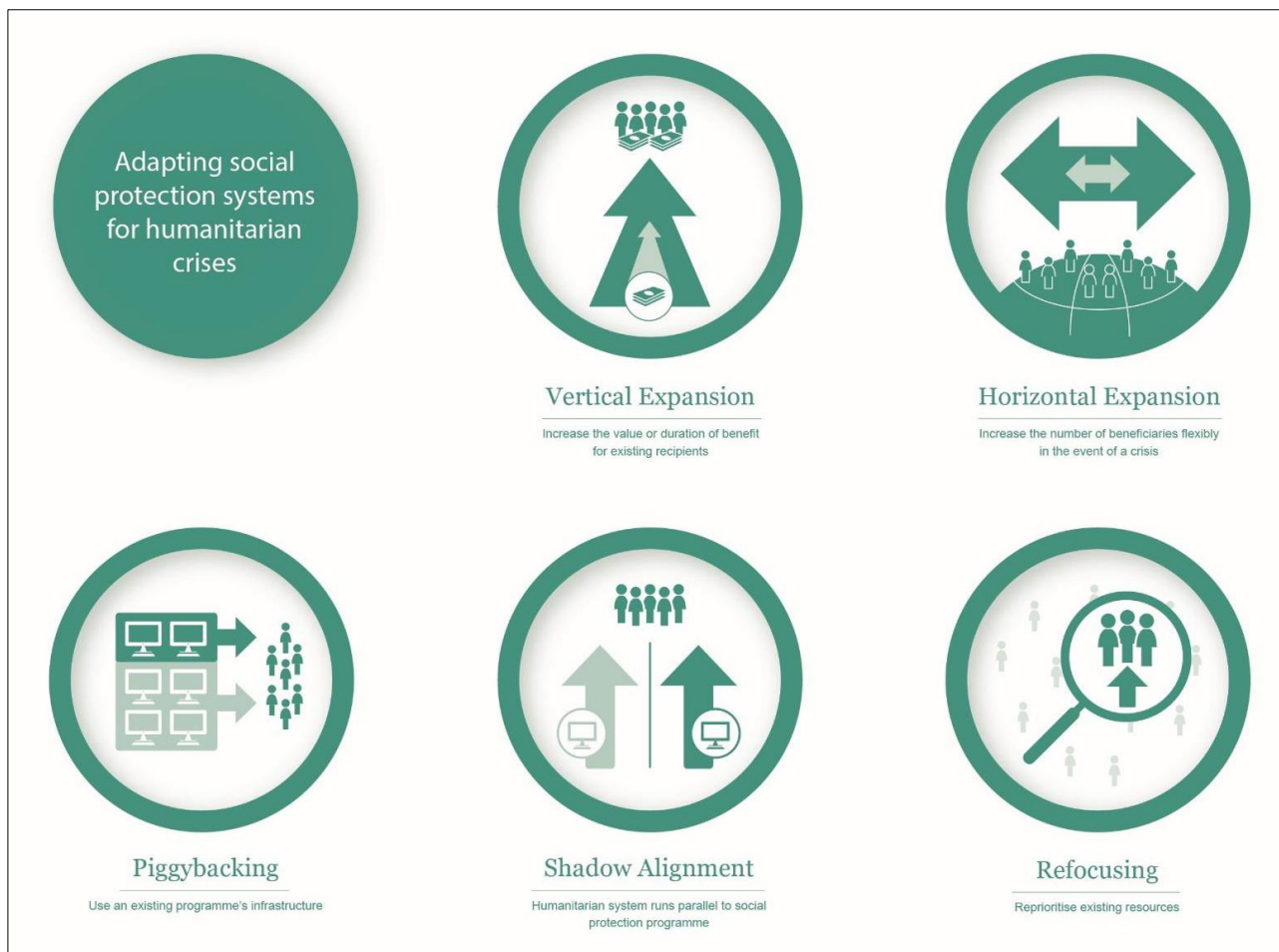
Source: OPM (2015). 'Shock-Responsive Social Protection Systems: A research programme for DFID'.

The present evaluation is thus of interest to policy-makers globally, as well as to those in Nepal, because the ECTP implemented two of the five possible approaches to adapting routine social protection systems for emergencies in its two-phase response (i.e. vertical expansion to existing beneficiaries and horizontal expansion to new beneficiaries). The experience of these approaches may vary. For example, a top-up has the advantage of being efficient, by saving the cost of new targeting, but it could cause resentment among communities who may consider it unfair that households who already receive routine cash transfers should get additional support (as was found, for instance, in the Philippines).[63] Conversely, the expansion of a programme to new beneficiaries may cost more and take more time, but may be more politically acceptable. The expertise of the intervening group could also be significant: for instance, it would make sense for UNICEF to focus on children (and mothers) as these are their target beneficiaries and they know how best to support them (rather than seniors or widows). Our evaluation pays attention to the relative merits and challenges of each approach.

1.1.4   UNICEF's response to the earthquakes in Nepal

UNICEF has been operational in Nepal for nearly half a century, implementing programmes in a myriad of development sectors. In April 2015, UNICEF Nepal was halfway through their national five-year programme, which outlines sector-wide approaches to programming in Nepal to improve

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[63] Smith, G., Scott, Z., Luna, E. and Lone, T. (2016) 'Shock-Responsive Social Protection Systems Research: Case study—Philippines', Oxford Policy Management, Oxford, UK. [Draft].

the situation for women and children. This includes education, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), DRR, emergency preparedness programming, support to a child grant in Karnali (in partnership with DoCR), and wider systems strengthening.[64] Immediately following the earthquakes, and in addition to Phases 1 and 2 of the ECTP, UNICEF also worked in the areas of health, education, child protection, nutrition, and WASH. UNICEF responded by distributing in-kind relief kits, providing safe drinking water in informal camps, constructing temporary learning centres and hospitals, providing child-friendly spaces in informal camps, screening for malnutrition, and implementing a widespread vaccination programme for measles, polio, and rubella, particularly for children who had been displaced into informal camps.[65] [66]

UNICEF is also involved with longer-term emergency response activities in the country. For instance, they have been supporting reconstruction and recovery of schools and health facilities. Under health and nutrition, UNICEF is supporting the delivery of essential services to children under five years of age, pregnant women, and lactating mothers. Similarly, UNICEF is providing support for the maintenance of existing transitional learning centres until permanent structures are built. UNICEF is also supporting the transitioning of child-friendly spaces into early childhood development and child care centres.[67]

During our research, we found that a number of other agencies, such as HelpAge International, Save the Children, and Oxfam, also implemented cash transfer programmes in response to the 2015 earthquake. In addition to its partnership with MoFALD following the earthquake, UNICEF thus participated in the CCG, coordinated by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and helped circulate social protection policy documents to the Cash Learning Partnership.

1.2   Overview of the programme

The ECTP was implemented in two phases. In both phases, the existing government social protection system was used to implement the programme and to transfer funds from UNICEF to the beneficiaries using the established payments system used by DDCs to transfer social security payments to beneficiaries via the VDC or municipality. In most cases, VDC secretaries physically carried the funds from the district to beneficiaries in the villages. Some municipalities already use bank transfers to make social protection payments to individual beneficiaries, so they used the same modality to transfer the post-earthquake cash transfers. In Phase 1, the timing for disbursing ECTP funds was intended to match the regular social protection transfer so that beneficiaries would receive an additional top-up at the time of collecting the regular government cash transfer. However, in practice, about half of the transfers to beneficiaries could not be made at the same time as the regular payments, and so had to be made as an additional payment at a later date.

The programme included an external and periodic M&E mechanism. The objective of the external mechanism was to provide real-time information for improving programme effectiveness, and that of the periodic monitoring was for adaptive learning, and providing lessons to strengthen the

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[64] UNICEF Nepal (2012) 'Country programme document: 2013–2017'. www.UNICEF.org/about/execboard/files/Nepal-2013-2017-final_approved-English-14Sept2012.pdf.
[65] UNICEF (2015) 'Five ways UNICEF is responding to the earthquake in Nepal'. www.UNICEFusa.org/stories/5-ways-UNICEF-responding-earthquakes-nepal/24631. It must be noted that UNICEF expected the first phase, targeting existing beneficiaries of the government's social protection system, to also end up benefitting children, as the availability of extra cash among family members was expected to be used towards the well-being of children as well.
[66] UNICEF Annual Report (2015) www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Nepal_2015_COAR.pdf
[67] UNICEF (2015) 'Reaching the Unreached'. www.recoveryplatform.org/assets/publication/NepalEarthquake2015/Nepal_reaching-the-unreached-six-months-review.pdf.

capacity of the government social protection system to respond to disasters. A collaborative partnership was established with an external firm, NEPAN, to shoulder this responsibility.

The sub-sections below will introduce the two phases of the ECTP, but these issues will be discussed in greater detail in Section 3 in this report. The cash transfer programme reached over 430,000 beneficiaries in Phase 1 and over 300,000 beneficiaries in Phase 2.

1.2.1 Phase 1

As discussed above, the GoN operates a social protection scheme where cash amounts ranging from NPR 200 to NPR 1,000 per month are paid to members of five vulnerable groups.[68] During the first phase of the programme, UNICEF and the GoN used the government's existing beneficiary list to add a 'top-up' of NPR 3,000 (about $30) to the regular social protection cash amounts. UNICEF's initial plan had been to disburse two tranches of funds to social protection payment recipients in 11 of the 14 districts identified as the most affected by the earthquakes (excluding three districts in Kathmandu valley, because of their perceived proximity to the centre, on the assumption that this proximity would mean more support would be provided to the beneficiaries in these three districts). However, valuable time in the first phase of the crisis was lost in Cabinet-level decision-making processes, which lasted for about a month. The Cabinet subsequently decided that the programme had to be expanded to the 19 heavily affected districts, including Kathmandu valley (as will be discussed in the next section). This decision limited the options available to UNICEF because it meant their finite budget had to cover a greater number of beneficiaries. This required them to reduce the disbursement to a single tranche covering the 19 districts.

The programme adopted various forms of communication, such as radio, community organisations, and local networks (such as Nepal Scouts across the target 19 districts) to generate awareness about the programme, to inform people of the eligibility criteria, to announce disbursement dates and to advertise the grievance redressal mechanism. In addition, booklets containing messages related to emergency preparedness measures, protecting water sources, and key health, hygiene and nutrition issues were intended to be distributed along with the cash during this phase.

Given UNICEF's focus on children, although Phase 1 disbursements were to be made to pre-identified vulnerable groups, UNICEF expected that this targeting would still trickle down to benefit children. Many of the old-age pensioners, for instance, were also expected to be grandparents, and the availability of more disposable income was expected to allow them greater financial freedom to support children in their households. The communication strategy employed to support the programme was designed to relay this message to potential programme beneficiaries.

Planning for Phase 1 started immediately after the first earthquake. The programme was internally approved by 19 May 2016, fund transfers began in June, and payments were made from 09 July. Phase 1 was intended to be the immediate relief phase, with the objective of helping families fulfil their immediate needs after the earthquake. Further details about the exact timeline will be discussed in detail in Section 3.1.

1.2.2 Phase 2

Phase 2 of the ECTP focused on the originally selected 11 most earthquake-affected districts. In this phase, the target population changed from the five vulnerable groups receiving GoN social protection payments to all children below five years of age in the 11 target districts. Each family

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[68] The payment amounts have been increased in line with the Finance Minister's budget speech in 2016.

was eligible to receive cash transfers for up to two children per mother, to remain consistent with the existing government scheme for Dalit children under five and all children under five in Karnali.

According to UNICEF staff, because the government database is limited to under-five Dalit children and children of the same age group in the Karnali region[69] the first step was to create a registry for all children under five years of age in the target districts, by conducting a household census. The government system required families to present birth certificates for their children to register for the programme, so the listing exercise bolstered birth registrations in these districts. The cash transfer was originally proposed to consist of two tranches of NPR 2,000 per child, though in fact it was administered as one tranche of NPR 4,000 per child after consultations with LDOs, as this proved to be simpler logistically for local officials and beneficiaries of the programme.

The cash transfer programme had a longer-term objective further supporting the expansion of the child grant and to strengthen systems for building the resilience of populations to shocks as a form of DRM. UNICEF sought to facilitate system strengthening by improving all the processes related to cash transfers, such as targeting and enrolment, payments, complaints and grievances, MIS, and M&E, including during the emergency context.

1.3   Structure of the report

The remainder of this report is structured as follows. Section 2 outlines the research questions and presents the evaluation design. Section 3 provides a summative assessment of the performance and impact of the ECTP. Section 4 provides a formative evaluation of the scope for shock-responsive social protection in Nepal and its strategic relevance.

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[69] In Karnali, one of the most remote districts in the far-west, the government provides regular social protection payments to all children, but at this time the program is limited only to this region.

2   Evaluation design

2.1   Evaluation objectives

The evaluation of UNICEF's ECTP is structured around three core objectives:

- **summative evaluation:** to assess the success of the ECTP relative to the immediate relief and recovery needs of the target group, and in relation to the wider humanitarian response;
- **formative evaluation:** to consolidate the learning from using social protection systems for an emergency response to inform the future use of such approaches in Nepal and globally; and,
- **assessment of strategic relevance:** to assess the extent to which this intervention has allowed the advancement of UNICEF's longer-term objectives around systems strengthening for social protection in Nepal.

2.2   Evaluation framework

To ensure that the evaluation addressed these three components in a coherent and consistent way, our evaluation considered the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria for evaluating humanitarian action, which was developed by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Introduced in 1999, the DAC criteria for humanitarian action comprise a set of seven criteria and incorporate sustainability as a sub-component of connectedness. The OPM evaluation criteria used here are thus similar to the OECD-DAC criteria for evaluations in that they assess relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. However, our evaluation criteria also include additional domains that are pertinent to evaluating the success of a humanitarian programme. Given the focus of UNICEF's programme on the sustainability of its relief and reconstruction efforts, we have integrated it more explicitly in our evaluation framework. Themes covered in this evaluation under each criterion are given below:

- **Relevance/appropriateness:** whether the choice of cash was appropriate to the context of post-earthquake Nepal, and whether the amount and regularity of the transfer was adequate.
- **Connectedness:** whether the ECTP was linked with the longer-term development efforts of UNICEF and its development partners in Nepal to ensure a smooth transition from humanitarian relief to building resilience.
- **Coordination:** whether there was coordination between all the stakeholders involved in the delivery of the ECTP.
- **Coverage:** whether the programme reached those most affected by the earthquakes, and to what degree.
- **Effectiveness:** whether the design and implementation of the programme enabled a timely and effective response.
- **Efficiency:** whether the processes adopted delivered assistance and information efficiently.
- **Impact:** whether the transfer was used as intended to improve the food consumption of children within the household, and for medicine, clothing or education, and whether it has had any impact on household livelihoods and coping strategies.
- **Sustainability:** whether any progress has been made towards achieving the longer-term objectives of UNICEF in Nepal around systems strengthening for social protection.

The DAC criteria for development do not feature the themes of coverage, coordination, and connectedness, which were crucial to the assessment of UNICEF's emergency cash transfer

programme, given the stated aims of providing immediate relief as well as early recovery in post-earthquake Nepal.

2.3   Research questions

The objectives of the programme as specified in the UNICEF proposal documents are as follows:

- **Immediate relief and early recovery**: to help meet the most immediate household expenditure requirements of the particularly vulnerable population, including children affected by the Nepal earthquakes in the short term.
- **Model building:** to help the GoN establish a model of rapid social transfers to vulnerable groups during future emergencies.
- **Longer-term strengthening of the social protection system for children in the country**: to help the GoN introduce a reliable and predictable form of income support for the medium term (beyond the emergency period) as part of the country's social protection system so as to reduce vulnerability, enhance resilience, and foster the development of children in the country.

The research questions gathered information around all three of the above objectives, with a particular focus on the processes underpinning each objective, as shown below:

Table 3:   Evaluation questions

Process	Key evaluation questions	Evaluation sub-questions	DAC criteria
Assessment	What were the reasons behind the choice to use cash as part of the emergency response? (Victim needs, availability of functioning markets, and beneficiary, government and donor preferences)	Who were the key stakeholders involved in making this decision? What experiences and cases did they rely on in making the decision? Were they specifically experienced in implementing a large-scale cash transfer programme in a post-disaster context? What information was used to determine the needs of the disaster-affected population and to design the programme?	Relevance
Design	Was the programme design (including targeting, value and regularity of transfer, payment system, grievance and communication mechanism etc.) appropriate for meeting the immediate and recovery needs of the affected/targeted population?	What was the rationale for choosing the selection criteria? (Vulnerable groups as opposed to earthquake-affected) How was the size and regularity of the transfer decided? Was this adequate to meet the requirements of the beneficiaries? To what extent? What other alternatives to the ECTP were considered? Why was the cash transfer pursued/ why	Relevance

Process	Key evaluation questions	Evaluation sub-questions	DAC criteria
	How did the design decision for Phase 2 differ from Phase 1?	were these alternatives not pursued? How was the learning from Phase 1 used to design Phase 2 of the programme?	
Targeting / enrolment	To what extent did the cash transfer reach the target population? How did this differ between Phase 1 and Phase 2?	How did the beneficiary selection relate to the targeting of other humanitarian assistance? (Social groups missed? Duplication?) How well did the targeting mechanism function? (model inclusion and exclusion errors by design, tensions)	Relevance Coverage
Implementation	How effective and efficient were the delivery processes for the cash payments and complementary booklets? What were the key changes from Phase 1 to Phase 2 in these processes? How timely was the response in relation to the needs of different social groups? How did this compare with other cash and in-kind assistance in the wider humanitarian response?	What were the implementation implications of using the existing social protection systems to deliver the cash transfer? (Key advantages, disadvantages, trade-offs with humanitarian response) How effective was the cash assistance in meeting immediate needs and in the recovery of households affected by the earthquakes? When was the cash assistance received? How did it affect the ability to meet the immediate needs of the disaster-affected households? What was the experience of beneficiaries regarding collecting the transfer amount? Were there any barriers or associated costs? What were the changes in Phase 2? How did beneficiaries use the grant? (How did it affect children under five, different social groups, and household livelihoods through purchase of livestock and other productive assets?) What else did households do to cope with the disaster? Has the	Effectiveness Coordination Impact

Process	Key evaluation questions	Evaluation sub-questions	DAC criteria
		transfer influenced post-disaster household coping strategies? Why/why not? Were there any problems with the implementation of the cash transfer? If yes, how were they resolved? Were there any changes in Phase 2?	
Monitoring	What kind of monitoring mechanisms were in place? How were they implemented and how effective were they? How did this change from Phase 1 to Phase 2?	Who was involved with the monitoring? What information was collected, and how was this used? What corrective measures were taken to address concerns that arose from the monitoring?	Effectiveness
Communication	What was the communication strategy for this programme? How effective were the communication mechanisms? How did this change from Phase 1 to Phase 2? How effective was the coordination between different stakeholders involved in the ECTP, and within UNICEF?	How did communication with, and information dissemination to, beneficiaries take place in both phases? What were the changes? How well was the programme coordinated with other agencies (different government agencies, UN, NGOs, and local organisations) engaged in the humanitarian response? How well was the programme coordinated between different teams (Social policy, Emergencies, Finance, Youth and adolescent etc.) within UNICEF? Were there particular challenges? How could they be addressed in the future?	Coordination
Sustainability	To what extent has the intervention allowed the advancement of UNICEF's longer-term objectives around systems strengthening for social protection in Nepal?	What progress has been made in laying the foundation for achieving the longer-term objectives of the original proposal ('Road to Recovery') in terms of activities undertaken and concrete outcomes? What are the exit/phase-out plans?	Connectedness Impact

Process	Key evaluation questions	Evaluation sub-questions	DAC criteria
	What can we learn from the response about the use of the social protection system for emergency response in Nepal to inform the future use of such approaches in Nepal and globally?	Has the programme resulted in actions at the national level to establish a shock-responsive system?	

A broad set of interrelated processes are required to deliver an unconditional cash transfer programme in an emergency context (see Figure 2). First, an assessment of the situation (including the needs of the affected population, the functioning of markets, and the ability of the existing administrative systems to deliver timely assistance) provides the critical information needed for designing an appropriate programme. Then, the design of the programme determines the target population, and the value, frequency and duration of the support to be given. Processes related to registration, payments, case management, grievances, MISs, and M&E follow the design of the programme. Communication and coordination form an important part of all the processes, hence cut across all stages of the programme.

Figure 2:   Cash transfer processes

Assessment	Programme design	Targeting/ enrolment	Payments	Case management	Grievances	Management information system	Monitoring and evaluation
Identification of the crisis affected; needs assessment of the affected population, markets for goods and services, existing systems to support cash or in kind programming; response analysis	Selection of management structure, target beneficiaries and locations, transfer amount; setup of systems covering all processes	Identification of beneficiary households; registration, including verification of identity documents; distribution of programme ID cards and materials to enable payment	Enrolment of payment providers; regular distribution of cash to provider, and from provider to beneficiaries; reconciliation of records of cash collected	Updating of records on beneficiary households' status in relation to criteria e.g. birth, migration, or death of household members	Access to systems for those excluded to appeal, or for beneficiaries to address complaints and queries about any aspect of the programme; registration, review and resolution of complaints	Maintenance of an electronic system for management of all information about applicants, beneficiaries and their payments	Ongoing monitoring and reporting between local and central level about progress in all aspects of cash transfer delivery

Coordination and communication with government, NGO partners; internal coordination with other teams responsible for humanitarian action; communication with beneficiaries and non beneficiaries on the programme

Source: OPM

For this evaluation, we consider these processes and assess them in relation to the DAC evaluation criteria. We also assess the overall appropriateness of the use of cash transfers as a response to the Nepal earthquake.

One key question that frames our analysis is whether the Nepal social protection system ought to be shock-responsive, and, if so, for what purposes? Can social protection perform as well as, or better than, humanitarian responses on key criteria such as timeliness, coverage of the affected population, and adequacy of the support provided? Is it more or less cost-effective when considering the various challenges to performing the necessary types of scale-up? Does the cost of maintaining a permanent, scalable social protection system outweigh the cost of setting up a

temporary humanitarian response at short notice to achieve the same level of benefit? While it is not possible to answer all of these questions in this evaluation alone, especially given the lack of a counterfactual, they need to be asked and answered in designing and implementing similar programmes in the future.

2.4 Research methods

This evaluation has relied on a combination of qualitative and quantitative data to assess UNICEF's post-earthquake cash transfer programmes. Qualitative methods have been used to collect primary data, and quantitative analysis of secondary data has further informed the evaluation. In terms of the qualitative research, four research teams used a range of formal and informal tools and observations to interact with officials and beneficiaries at the central, district, and village or municipality levels. Such a comprehensive, rounded approach has allowed us to build a holistic picture of the programme.

We adhered to ethical research protocols when interacting with respondents. Our research teams clearly explained the purpose of our visit and established our independence from UNICEF, as well as from the GoN. We ensured that all respondents were aware that their participation in the research was voluntary, and that they were free to not answer any question or to end the interview at any time. We explained to our respondents that our conversation would remain confidential within the research team, and that we would anonymise the identity of the respondents should we use their responses in the report. We also informed them that they could ask us questions at any time. We received explicit informed oral consent from all respondents before beginning our sessions, and sought permission to record our conversations so as to be able to transcribe them later for internal use. We tried our utmost to maintain the privacy of our discussions by carrying out the interviews in isolated settings where confidentiality could be maintained. This was not always possible due to space limitations in some of our field sites, as will be discussed in the limitations section below.

2.4.1 Primary data collection

Research sites

The ECTP operated in 19 districts during Phase 1 and in 11 districts during Phase 2. Since the evaluation had to assess both the relief and recovery phases, we selected our research sites from the list of 11 districts included in both phases of the programme. Research districts were purposively selected based on a range of variables of interest, such as geography, timing of programme processes, exposure to other post-disaster aid, and degree of earthquake affectedness. Using existing evidence from UNICEF, the CCG and the most recent national census (2011), and in close consultation with key stakeholders in Nepal, we classified each district along these variables of interest. We used a detailed matrix for all districts, to select the four districts for our research. The selected districts are presented in Table 3.

Table 4: **District selection matrix**

	Region			Terrain		Phase 1 roll-out		Phase 2 roll-out		General aid coverage		Earthquake-affected ness	
	Western	Eastern	Central	Hills	Mountain	Early	Late	Early	Late	High	Low	High	Low
Gorkha	■			■			■	■		■		■	
Okhaldhunga		■		■		■		■			■		■
Sindhuli			■	■			■	■			■		■
Sindhupalchowk			■		■	■			■	■		■	

Note: Region and terrain as per the national census 2011 classifications. Aid coverage indicator based on CCG multipurpose grant amounts allocated per region. Earthquake affectedness indicator based on the number of households partially or completely destroyed due to earthquake (drrportal.gov.np).

The four districts were selected to ensure as broad a balance as possible across the relevant variables in order to enable useful comparisons across research sites. For example, since our sample included districts with early as well as late programme roll-out, and districts with high as well as relatively low degrees of earthquake affectedness, we could qualitatively assess the impact of timely programme roll-out versus delayed roll-out across districts that were highly affected by the earthquake (Gorkha versus Sindhupalchowk), as well as those that were less affected (Okhaldhunga versus Sindhuli). Our sample tried to balance all the selection variables, as follows:

- Gorkha and Okhaldhunga are the only two non-central districts in the 11 most affected districts, so they were automatically selected in order to ensure regional diversity. Gorkha was the epicentre of the earthquake, so it was selected as a priority site for our research.
- Sindhuli and Sindhupalchowk are both central districts; Sindhuli is hilly, while Sindhupalchowk is classified as being mountainous.
- The selected districts had a good balance of early and late programme roll-out in Phase 1 and Phase 2. Specifically, Sindhupalchowk was the first district to start cash transfers in the first phase, but it was the last district to roll out the transfers in Phase 2. Similarly, Sindhuli was late to roll out Phase 1 but was one of the first districts to start Phase 2 of programme implementation.
- There is also an equal spread of humanitarian assistance coverage across the districts. The non-central regions include one district with high aid coverage (Gorkha) and one with relatively low coverage (Okhaldhunga). Similarly, the central regions have a district with high aid coverage (Sindhupalchowk) and one with relatively low coverage (Sindhuli).
- The degree of earthquake affectedness, as indicated by the number of households completely destroyed or partially damaged, also divides the sample equally – Sindhupalchowk and Gorkha were highly affected (with over 65,000 households damaged or destroyed) while Sindhuli and Okhaldhunga were both affected by the earthquake to a lesser degree (with fewer than 30,000 households damaged or destroyed by the earthquake).

Within each district, we visited the DDC as well as one VDC or municipality. For a further analysis of respondents from a variety of local conditions we selected a variety of local sampling units based on their proximity to the centre, as demonstrated below:

- two remote VDCs – one each in Gorkha and Okhaldhunga;
- one non-remote VDC – in Sindhupalchowk; and
- one municipality – in Sindhuli.

This selection allowed for a comparison across the extreme cases, in terms of earthquake affectedness, terrain, and timeliness of response. However, during the fieldwork, we had to make some adjustments to reflect on-the-ground realities. For instance, we realised that the VDC we had selected in Sindhupalchowk was actually part of Chautara Municipality. This had not been recognised before the fieldwork, and since the evaluation team had already carried out a number of research activities, we decided to continue the research in the selected site. The confusion arose because the expected 'VDC' had become incorporated as part of the municipality in 2014, but even the locals referred to the ward secretary (who is a municipality official) as 'VDC secretary', because the same person had taken over the responsibilities within the new administrative setup. Similarly, the research team could not reach the intended VDC, Sherna, in Okhaldhunga because roads had been blocked after recent landslides. We replaced Sherna VDC with Baruneshwor VDC in consultation with UNICEF, as Baruneshwor appeared to be the most accessible remote VDC. In addition, we arranged a focus group discussion (FGD) with VDC secretaries and ward secretaries in each district to ensure a good breadth of information was gathered from each district, even if we were able to visit only one site per district.

Key informants

We met multiple stakeholders, representing two categories of respondents: those directly engaged with the ECTP specifically, and those involved in general social protection in Nepal. All respondents were asked most questions across all of the research themes in order to triangulate information across respondents.

Table 5 provides a consolidated list of stakeholders consulted. At each organisation we spoke to as many of the relevant respondents as possible. In addition, we interviewed government officials who were no longer serving in their posts but who had valuable information regarding the cash transfer programme and/or the wider policy environment in Nepal.

Table 5:   Relevant stakeholders consulted

Respondent level	Organisations/agencies/personnel
GoN (central)	MoFALD, including the DoCR
	MoF
	NPC
	Ministry of Home Affairs
	NRA
UNICEF (central)	Social Policy Unit
	Emergency Unit
	Senior management
District	LDO
	Cash distribution focal person, DDC
	Finance officer, DDC
	Chief District Officer and Deputy Superintendent of Police, District Disaster Risk Committee (DDRC)
	Representatives from local banks
	NEPAN
	UNICEF
Village/municipality	Secretaries and Technical Assistants, VDC/ward
	CEO, municipality
	Social Mobiliser, VDC
	Representatives from local bodies (Ward Citizens' Forum, Consultative Committee, Integrated Committee)
Community	Beneficiaries from Phase 1
	Beneficiaries from Phase 2
	Non-beneficiaries
	Local influencers or leaders
	Social service providers (teachers or health workers)
Programme implementation	Nepal Participatory Action Network
	PHD group
International organisations	ADB
	DFID
	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)
	World Bank
	WFP
	UN OCHA
	Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP) staff deployed in Nepal

Sampling and respondent selection

We selected our key informants based on their depth of knowledge about the programme and the social protection environment in Nepal in order to obtain comprehensive knowledge about the programme. During inception we worked with UNICEF to identify all actors involved with the programme, and we identified our key informants consultatively during that phase.

Figure 3:   List of key stakeholders and research respondents

As the figure above demonstrates, our research team (Third party evaluation) was able to engage with almost all the key stakeholders as part of the primary research on the ECTP.

The implications of our sampling strategy are discussed further in Section 2.5.

Research tools

We employed multiple qualitative research methods during the course of our research. The instruments were developed in close consultation with UNICEF, government actors, and other stakeholders during the inception phase. For key informants at the national level, we used a single semi-structured interview guide, which we tailored to each specific respondent. We used a similar approach at the district and local levels as well, tailoring a comprehensive interview or group discussion guide according to the experiences and knowledge of particular respondents. A selection of research guides used during primary data collection are presented in Annex C.

The semi-structured tools allowed us to structure the research, to be flexible, and to adapt to unanticipated areas of enquiry that developed during the course of research. The findings of this research have also been informed by numerous informal conversations and observations throughout the fieldwork.

Table 6 summarises the research methods we used for different types of respondents, along with their particular contribution to this research.

Table 6:   Research method and purpose

Method	Purpose
Interviews	• To obtain in-depth information from individual respondents and stakeholders. • To provide respondents with privacy and freedom to respond openly without the presence of other group or community members.

Method	Purpose
FGDs	• To understand multiple viewpoints and capture different experiences and perceptions. • To increase research coverage. • To allow for internal verification of information through the participation of multiple respondents. • To gauge the degree of agreement and disagreement on key themes.
Informal observations	• To build a rapport with respondents. • To assess the general situation in our research sites. • To develop an informal understanding of programme plans, operational quality, and efficiency. • To verify the findings gathered through more formal research processes.
Short workshops	• To review and discuss findings, key implications of findings, and to garner consensus on emerging findings.

Data collection, training, and analysis

The evaluation team hired eight local researchers to carry out the qualitative fieldwork. The research team spent four days in Kathmandu, where they participated in a rigorous and interactive training session. Local researchers were trained on the general methods and best practices of qualitative research, the purpose of the evaluation, specific research questions, and research tools. On the third day of the training we conducted a pilot exercise to test the instruments and ensure that the researchers were prepared for the fieldwork. The training also provided us with an opportunity to translate all the research tools into Nepali, and to adapt and improve the tools before the fieldwork.

The evaluation team split into four teams to carry out the research, with each team comprising a core evaluation team member and two local researchers, one male and one female. The use of local researchers allowed the research to be conducted in the local language to facilitate fluent conversations with our respondents.

During the course of the fieldwork, the research team met every evening to carry out an extensive, guided debrief session, in which they reviewed all the observations and key findings from that day. These debriefing sessions allowed the researchers to discuss each day's progress, and these debriefs, along with the translated transcripts of all the interviews and group discussions, provide the basis for the analysis that follows.

Table 6 below provides a summary of the number and types of interviews carried out in each research site.

Table 7:   Relevant stakeholders consulted

District	Key informant interviews (KIIs) conducted at district level	FGDs conducted at district level[70]	KIIs conducted at VDC/ municipality level	FGDs conducted at VDC/municipality level
Gorkha	6	0	3	4
Sindhupalchowk	6	0	5	4
Sindhuli	5	2	4	3
Okhaldhunga	6	2	4	3

Each research team carried out a number of informal and unstructured interviews with various people, in addition to the scheduled interviews and FGDs mentioned here.

2.4.2   Secondary data analysis

We conducted analysis of secondary quantitative data in order to provide contextual information at the national, regional, and international levels, as well as to triangulate findings from our primary qualitative research. Our secondary data analysis used a range of existing datasets, such as the Nepal Living Standard Survey 2010/11, UNICEF Phase 2 census data, both rounds of NEPAN PDM, the Economic Survey 2015/16, and the OECD database for Nepal.

We have incorporated relevant data from these datasets throughout this report to complement our findings on what worked well, what could have been improved, and what lessons can be drawn for future programmes. We tabulated variables of interest, such as cost incurred while collecting funds, time taken to receive the cash, and whether the beneficiary received cash using the NEPAN PDM data. Our analysis includes a disaggregation of data along location (VDCs versus municipalities), and, where useful, districts to obtain a more nuanced understanding of trends. In order to provide national, regional, and international contexts, we developed indicators such as social security expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP), average household expenditure, and value of cash transfer in relation to household expenditure.

2.5   Limitations

We faced a number of challenges during our fieldwork, and although we tried to address them through our iterative research process, we are aware of some limitations of our research. We wish to acknowledge these limitations here. Some of the implications of these limitations will be discussed in greater detail in the substantive chapters.

2.5.1   Space and timing of KIIs and FGDs

The research team sought to conduct all interviews and FGDs in private to ensure a safe space for the respondents. However, this was not always possible at either the government offices or during community visits, for a number of reasons. At the government offices, the lack of availability of free rooms meant that a number of interviews had to be conducted in the rooms of the officials. In some

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[70] The original research design had been to carry out only KIIs at the district level. However, in two of the districts the research team was able to arrange additional FGDs to gather more information.

cases our respondents shared their office with other officials, and although we requested respondents look for alternative spaces to carry out interviews, this was not always possible. When an alternative office was available we tried to use that space, but this meant that some interviews were carried out in the offices of senior staff. Although these senior officials were not present during our interviews in these cases, the lack of a neutral space for these conversations could have affected our respondents.

The issue of space was similarly relevant in the community context as well, as we had to rely on spaces such as tea stalls, open fields, and halls in public buildings to speak with beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of the programme. Public buildings were especially concerning because various government officials could be in the vicinity, and so could try to influence proceedings or, more often, listen in on our conversations. Whenever possible, we requested our contacts and other officials afford our research teams and participants enough privacy for us to maintain anonymity and confidentiality while carrying out our work. At the same time, our arrival generated a lot of excitement and interest in our field sites, so even when we made it clear that we wanted to speak only to our sampled beneficiaries or non-beneficiaries, villagers regularly congregated to listen to our conversation and share their views. Given the nature of our field sites, it was never really possible to ensure fully that non-participants were not within earshot of our interviews or discussions. Although our respondents did not seem too hesitant about engaging with us in these communal spaces, they would presumably have been more comfortable in a different setting, without these disturbances.

The timing of our interactions also posed some problems for us. Government officials were often very busy, as we will discuss in greater detail in subsequent chapters, and so we had to schedule (and sometimes reschedule) our conversations with them to fit their needs. Many of our interviews and conversations were interrupted by other officers as well as people visiting these offices, and their work necessarily took priority over our conversation. At one government office our research team had to wait over two hours to complete a short conversation with an official because a number of issues kept coming up, and the official had to deal with those issues first. Our conversations with local counterparts had made it clear that officials were most likely to be in their office in the mornings, but this also meant that we were essentially competing for their time, given their multitude of responsibilities.

2.5.2 Sampling difficulties

Although the research team had planned a random sampling strategy for selecting our respondents, especially for FGDs, the on-the-ground realities required us to adapt our plans. For instance, we wanted to select Phase 1 and Phase 2 beneficiaries randomly from our target VDCs or municipalities by using the dataset used to disburse payments in our field sites. However, this sampling method often required us to seek respondents from villages or localities far away from our primary research sites. It was not possible for the research team to travel to those sites, and requiring potential respondents to travel a significant distance, including having to walk for up to a day, to participate in our discussion would place an undue burden on them. In such situations, the research team worked with local officials and villagers to identify appropriate respondents who could provide us with the necessary details, without having to face significant difficulties in the process.

In practical terms, this approach was necessary because of time and resource constraints, but it meant that our sample was biased towards accessible respondents who were able to meet with us fairly easily. However, we sought to mitigate this bias in two ways. First, in selecting our replacement respondents we tried to prioritise those people and communities not otherwise represented by our random sampling. Second, we also carried out additional research activities to

compensate for our sampling bias. For instance, in Okhaldhunga, because the FGDs overwhelmingly comprised so-called high caste members, we conducted an informal discussion with Dalit families as well as indigenous families, to obtain their views and learn about their experiences. Similarly, in Sindhuli, we carried out additional KIIs and informal observations in rural settings to provide our findings with greater balance.

These challenges also serve to demonstrate the difficult circumstances within which the ECTP is being implemented. As discussed earlier, if the research team was unable to access some of the beneficiary sites or meet with some of the beneficiaries in remote parts of Nepal even for evaluation purposes, it is not difficult to imagine the difficulties of implementing a large-scale cash transfer programme in such rural and geographically challenging contexts. Future programmes, and evaluation activities, have to remain mindful of these realities.

2.5.3   Lack of programme knowledge

We had identified a list of key stakeholders through whom we aimed to collect information about the ECTP, and we expected to triangulate our findings at each level through responses from multiple actors in each district. However, during the course of the research it became clear that many of our respondents were not always certain about the key facets of the programme. In particular, government officials were not always aware of the implementation details for ECTP because of high turnover, whereas beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries faced recall difficulties in determining the impact of a programme that had already ended.

High turnover

UNICEF worked closely with government officials to implement the cash transfer programme. The turnover in the civil service was very high throughout this programme. We interviewed a number of staff, including high-ranking district officials who were not in the target districts for part or all of the time when the programmes were being implemented. Some officials had served in other earthquake-affected districts, and so drew on those experiences in responding to our queries. While these responses helped us situate the post-earthquake response more generally, they were not instructive in regard to understanding and triangulating UNICEF's response in the target districts. Some other officials did not have any direct experience in either the target districts or their previous assignments, so their knowledge of the programme was limited to current post-earthquake programmes (and most notably the government's reconstruction grant) and/or was informed by a more general, anecdotal, or national impression of the response.

Recall problems

When we carried out the research for this evaluation the distribution of funds for Phase 1 had been completed for almost a year. In the meantime, numerous other programmes and disbursements had taken place, especially in the severely affected districts that were the focus of this programme. A number of cash transfers had also been provided in the same villages, and often to the same respondents. As a result, many of our respondents, especially at the community level, struggled to recall the exact nature and impact of the UNICEF cash transfer. The research team had to provide a lot of corroborating information and to probe respondents on the details in order to obtain meaningful information from a number of respondents. The timing of the evaluation thus played a critical role in determining the type and extent of evidence that could be gathered to assess the programme.

At the same time, some of the research teams also faced difficulties collecting information about Phase 2, as the programme was still being rolled out in some of the target districts. The research

team's strategy to visit multiple sites rolling out Phase 2 at different speeds meant that we were able to collectively assess the state of the ECTP, but it was not necessarily possible to triangulate this information for each district (or from all respondents in each district).

Reflexivity is a key component of carrying out rigorous qualitative research, and the research team engaged with these challenges and limitations throughout the fieldwork, and during the analysis and writing of the report. While these limitations have imposed some constraints in parts of our analysis, our research design was both extensive and adaptive, ensuring that mitigation strategies were in place to address these concerns. Similarly, these limitations are also symptomatic of the on-the-ground realities and challenges of implementing a large, complex programme in the immediate aftermath of a devastating natural disaster.

3   Summative evaluation

The greatest strength of UNICEF's ECTP was its coverage – during Phase 1 the programme successfully provided a top-up to about over 430,000 beneficiaries, which equalled 93% of regular social assistance beneficiaries,[71] while in Phase 2 the programme reached over 300,000 children below the age of five.[72] The programme adhered to its aim of systems strengthening by utilising the existing social assistance delivery infrastructure to distribute the cash transfer. Both the NEPAN PDM surveys and our own research found that the cash support was largely appreciated by beneficiaries, who used it to meet their basic needs (food, clothing, medication), and even to save, especially in Phase 2. The ECTP was thus successful in meeting its broad aims and objectives, albeit with some operational challenges along the way. This evaluation of UNICEF Nepal's delivery of the ECTP offers a useful opportunity to recognise successes in the delivery model, and more importantly, to reflect upon and improve disaster response programmes in the future. In presenting our evaluation of the programme we acknowledge the coverage and quality of the programme, and we commend UNICEF's deep understanding, and excellent analysis, of the situation as regards addressing the immediate needs of vulnerable groups in Nepal.

The first part of this evaluation involves an assessment of the performance of the ECTP in terms of meeting the immediate relief and recovery needs of programme beneficiaries. This is provided via a detailed review of the processes, from the national level to the beneficiary level, for each phase of the programme. Since the cash transfer had two discrete phases—Phase 1 took place soon after the earthquake and was targeted towards providing immediate relief, and Phase 2 was designed to meet the recovery needs of the beneficiaries a year after the earthquake—we have presented our analysis and recommendations separately by phase.

Before evaluating the performance of both phases of the ECTP it is important to highlight that in developing their post-earthquake response in Nepal UNICEF made a conscious choice to prioritise social protection as opposed to standard humanitarian response. This choice embodied a trade-off between leveraging an existing functioning system and adhering to humanitarian principles of neutrality and universality of coverage. The programme design also made certain implicit and explicit assumptions, especially in regard to complementarity with and coverage of other post-disaster response activities, which affected key parameters such as transfer amount and coverage. Throughout the sections that follow we assess the merits and demerits of UNICEF's approach and provide recommendations for how the programme could be improved for an emergency context in the future.

Figure 4 below presents our summary understanding of the processes followed in each phase. These processes will be discussed in detail throughout this section.

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[71] Gurung, Y.B. *et al.* (2016) 'Assessment of the Emergency Top-Up Cash Transfer Programme for Vulnerable Groups in Nepal'. NEPAN, Kathmandu.
[72] This estimate is subject to revision since Phase 2 distributions were ongoing at the time of writing this report.

Figure 4:   UNICEF ECTP process map
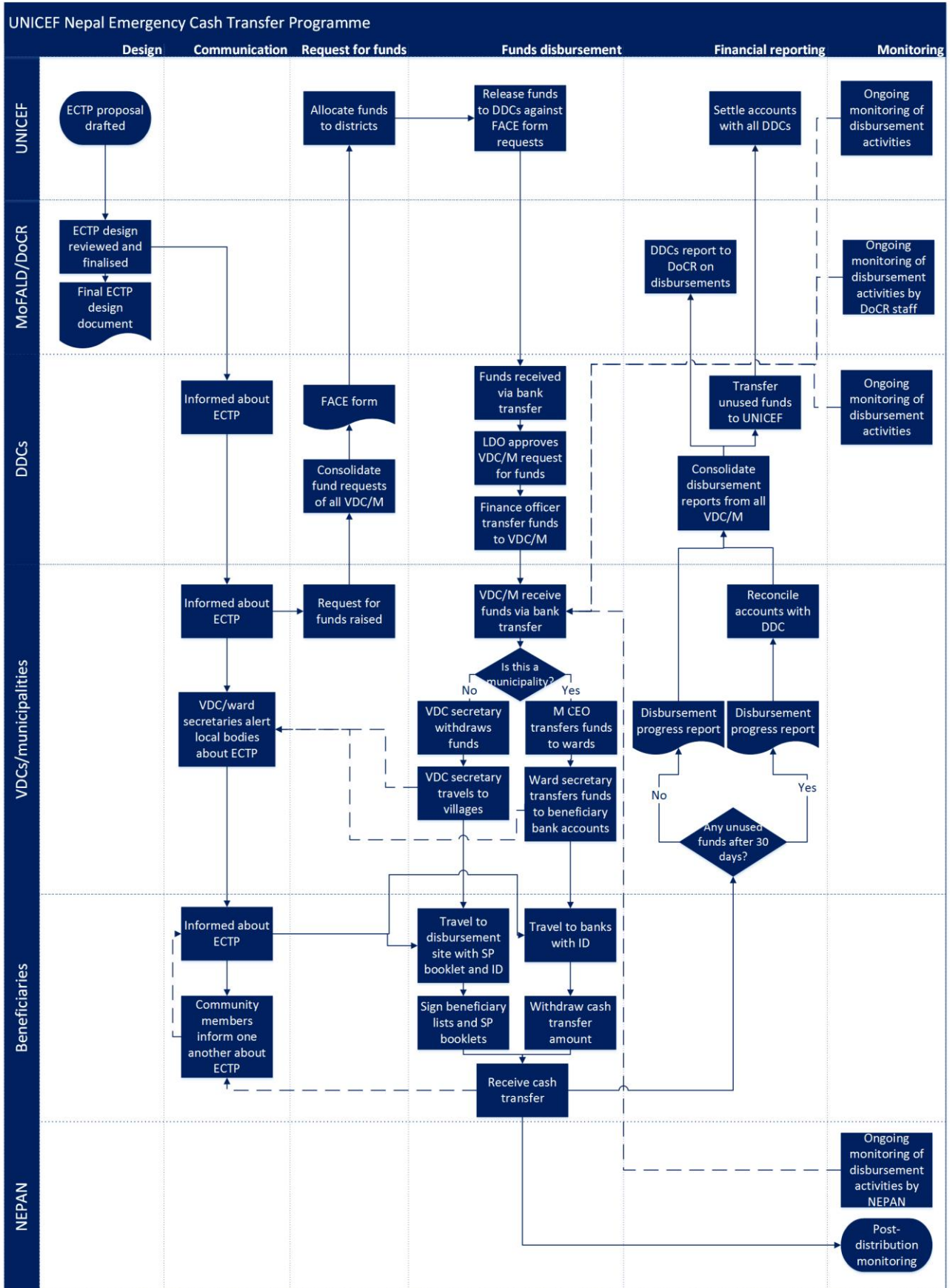
Source: OPM (fieldwork)

3.1 ECTP: Phase 1

3.1.1 Introduction

UNICEF's ECTP in Nepal relied on the GoN's existing social protection system to identify beneficiaries and disburse cash (see Section 1.1.3). A range of actors were involved in the delivery of the cash transfer at the central, district and local levels (Figure 5). Since the delivery of the programme relied on the existing system, most of the actors were already involved with the government's regular cash transfers. A few new actors, including the UNICEF SPEA team at the centre, the UNICEF field offices, and an external monitoring mechanism, were introduced into the existing social assistance delivery system.

Figure 5:   Key stakeholders in Phase 1 of the ECTP
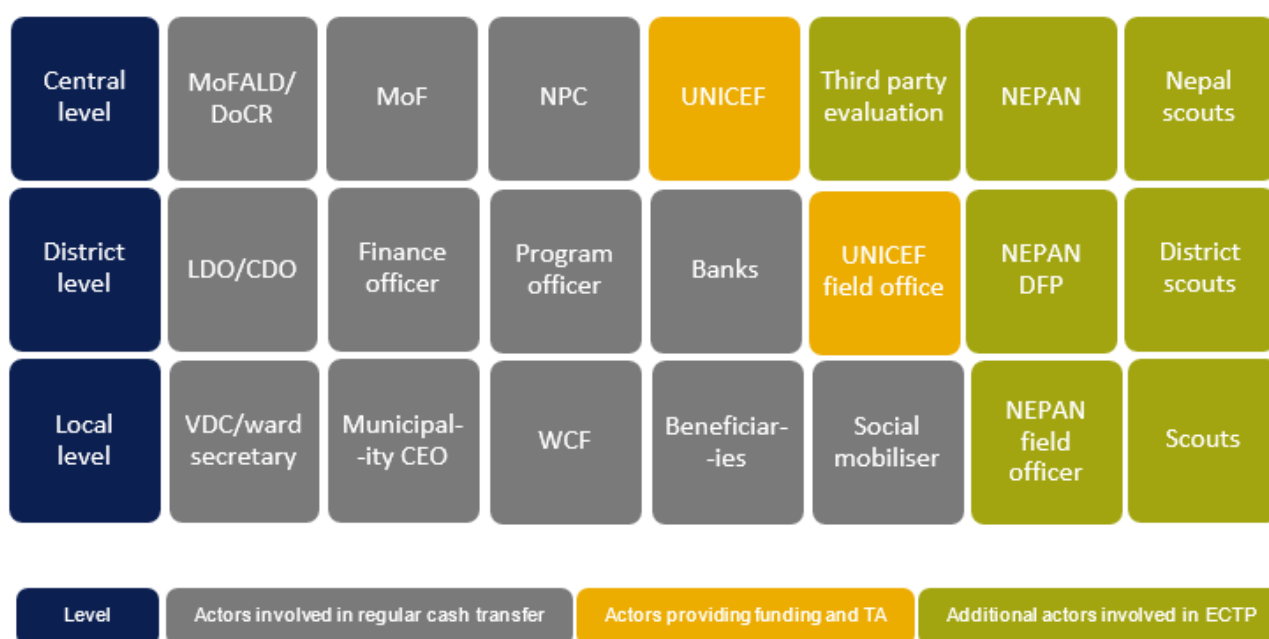
Source: OPM (based on field research)

The sections that follow discuss the roles of each of these actors in detail, highlighting their roles by reference to the sub-themes of programme design, implementation, monitoring, communication and coordination during Phase 1. Each sub-section first presents an outline of the process, followed by a discussion of the key findings that emerged during that phase of programme activity. Key lessons learned are indicated within the relevant sections for Phase 1, and are also discussed in detail in Section 3.3, after consolidation with the Phase 2 findings.

3.1.2 Design

Phase 1 of UNICEF's ECTP was aligned closely with the existing cash-based social assistance programmes in Nepal. It thus relied on their systems for beneficiary identification and transfer of payments. These payments were made in 19 earthquake-affected districts through VDCs and municipality wards. The UNICEF transfer was envisioned as a 'top-up' to the regular payments, with the intention of making the emergency payment at the same time as the regular payment, so as to capitalise on the existing system without further burdening the actors involved.

The original plan had been to target 11 of the 14 most affected districts, with the three districts in Kathmandu valley excluded because of their proximity to the centre. The programme was also

expected to provide two tranches of disbursement to the beneficiaries. However, the programme had to be expanded to cover 19 affected districts in order to accommodate the requests made by the GoN to increase the programme's geographical coverage. The increase in the number of beneficiaries required UNICEF to adjust the payment to provide only one disbursement to each beneficiary in the 19 districts.

Motivation

Immediately following the first earthquake on 25 April 2015 UNICEF made the decision to provide cash assistance to the affected population. This decision was based on the findings of market assessments conducted by various organisations, including the Nepal Food Security Monitoring System (NeKSAP) in April/May 2015, which indicated that markets, particularly for food commodities, were recovering fast in most earthquake-affected areas. The market assessments found that remote mountain areas were an exception to this general trend.[73]

The formal proposal for the cash transfer programme was submitted internally within UNICEF on 18 May, and approved the following day. This programme was designed initially for 11 of the most severely affected districts of Nepal. Staff from the UNICEF SPEA team in Kathmandu, the NPC, and the DoCR within MoFALD participated in the programme design process. By the end of May 2015, the proposal for the first phase of the ECTP was submitted to the MoF, who in turn forwarded it to the Cabinet for approval. The process of obtaining approvals from the MoF, MoFALD, and the Cabinet led to some key changes in the programme design. According to UNICEF:

> *The proposal was developed with MoFALD and signed off by the MoF in a few weeks, which is pretty quick, but [it] got stuck in the Cabinet. Things got politicised in terms of coverage. We wanted to go to 11 districts, [and give] 6,000 rupees…but some bureaucrats within MoFALD saw advantage in expanding coverage. There was some discussion within MoFALD and MoF in extending coverage, the decision went up to Cabinet, sat with them for a month, [and] got signed off by them towards the end of June. They decided we had to go to 19 districts. [We] did a one tranche delivery then.* (Central-level KII, UNICEF)

After approval from the Cabinet, funds were released to DDCs in 19 districts between the end of June and mid-August 2015.

The objective of the first phase of the ECTP was 'to provide short-term relief and recovery to vulnerable people and their households in earthquake-affected districts through existing social assistance schemes.'[74] Though UNICEF's initial post-disaster response included in-kind transfers, such as tents, hygiene kits, food, and medical kits, cash was selected as the preferred mode for the larger intervention, on the basis that it would be more efficient, households would be better aware of their needs, and that the freedom of choice that cash provides was desirable in itself.

> *Though running a cash transfer is challenging, it is the right way to reach the people…sometimes people get supplies that they don't need or get supplies that other agencies have already given them. This [cash transfer] keeps their dignity intact…we got feedback that they can use this money on things that they actually want like, food or medicine.* (Central-level KII, UNICEF)

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[73] NeKSAP and WFP (2015) 'Nepal earthquake 2015, Findings and maps', May 2015 Release 2&3.
Save the Children (2015) 'Food Security and Livelihoods Recovery Assessment Report', Nepal Earthquake Response, July 2015.
[74] Rabi, A. *et al.* (2015) 'The Road to Recovery: Cash Transfers as an Emergency Response to Nepal's Earthquake of 2015 and a Catalyst for Consolidating Nepal's Social Protection Floor.' UNICEF Nepal, Kathmandu.

The decision on how to deliver the cash assistance to the earthquake-affected population was guided by UNICEF's interest in strengthening existing social protection systems in Nepal, and by its work since 2009 on the child grants system in the Karnali region of the country. UNICEF staff felt that using the existing social security system would allow greater coverage and speedier disbursement of the cash grant, though UNICEF staff were also aware of the challenges associated with this approach:

> [UNICEF] saw this as being able to support government – not creating parallel systems, achieving high coverage, and delivering [the grant] relatively quickly after the earthquake. Given the scale, it was relatively quicker than some NGO responses…but on the negative side we knew that we would have some exclusion problems; for example, the [existing] child grant only covers Dalits [children] under five…this was the big debate to see if this was the right approach, as [children under five are] one of UNICEF's key groups…a lot of these children would be missed out. (Central-level KII, UNICEF)

As discussed, UNICEF made a conscious decision to work with the existing social protection system and beneficiary lists, and to prioritise the potential for speedy delivery, at the risk of excluding people affected by the earthquake but not included in the government's list of social protection beneficiaries.

Transfer amount

There were several factors that influenced the value of the cash transfer. UNICEF staff reported using rough calculations based on their understanding of individual consumption needs, as extrapolated from the Nepal Living Standards Survey (NLSS) 2010/11:

> [The transfer amount was] decided given our understanding of individual's consumption using the Nepal Living Standards Survey and based on other programmes expected to be coming in, either cash or in-kind. [It was] also based on the [programme] budget, number of beneficiaries, and what made sense in dividing that up. Poverty line is around NPR 1,600 per person, per month, [so] NPR 3,000 provides half the consumption for an individual over a four-month period. (Central-level KII, UNICEF)

The initial proposal was to target all government social protection beneficiaries in 11 of the most affected earthquake districts, and the expectation had been that UNICEF could provide NPR 6,000 per beneficiary in two tranches in those districts. However, when the coverage of Phase 1 had to be increased to 19 districts, UNICEF had to reduce the total transfer amount to NPR 3,000 per beneficiary. Given the change in the transfer value based on programme coverage, it is clear that the size of the budget envelope was the main determinant of the value of the transfer.

UNICEF provided NPR 3,000 to each eligible individual. This was assumed to cover roughly half the value of total per capita consumption for a four-month period.

Table 8 presents the average monthly per capita total consumption and the average monthly per capita food consumption for three groups: social assistance beneficiaries in earthquake-affected areas, earthquake-affected areas population, and all of Nepal. It also shows average household size, the average number of individuals in each household that would qualify for any of the regular social assistance programmes, and thus the average value of the ECTP transfer a household would ostensibly have been eligible to receive, as well as the average value of the ECTP actually received, as reported by the NEPAN PDM survey.

These data suggest that the value of the ECTP per individual was roughly equivalent to the value of per capita consumption for one month – about half the assumed value. If the ECTP was expected to cover basic consumption, the assumption was closer to the reality, as food

consumption for social assistance beneficiary households in earthquake-affected areas has a value of just over NPR 1,600, meaning that the NPR 3,000 would indeed cover close to half the food consumption for one person over four months.

In fact, ECTP beneficiary households are likely to have received more than NPR 3,000 on average. NLSS data show that social assistance beneficiary households contain 1.1 eligible individuals on average, implying they would be eligible for NPR 3,300 from the ECTP on average. The NEPAN data give an even higher figure as reported by ECTP recipients themselves (NPR 4,210).

Table 8:   Consumption and poverty indicators – Phase 1

	Social assistance beneficiaries in earthquake-affected areas (average across all groups based on NLSS)	Earthquake-affected areas	Nepal
Overall poverty rate	23.9%	23.9%	25.2%
Average per capita monthly consumption (NPR)	2,984	3,002	2,680
Average per capita monthly food consumption (NPR)	1,630	1,690	1,574
Average household size	5.0	4.7	4.9
Average number of eligible social assistance recipients per household	1.1	0.2	0.2
Average value of the ECTP top-up received per household in Phase 1 (NEPAN data)	4,210	n/a	n/a
Average value of the ECTP top-up eligible to receive	3,300	n/a	n/a

Source: NLSS 2010/11.

Our research suggests that although the ECTP was provided to certain eligible individuals, it was largely treated and used as income for the whole household (see Section 3.1.4 below). This suggests that the ECTP would have been *de facto* stretched across all household members, and in that case would have supported household consumption for a much shorter period. According to the NLSS the average size of social assistance beneficiary households in earthquake-affected areas is five people. If ECTP beneficiary households received on average NPR 4,210, the per capita value of the transfer would be around NPR 800 – roughly equivalent to half of one month's food consumption per person.

The low value of the ECTP in real terms is further evidenced by comparing the transfer amount to the pre-crisis per capita expenses for one of the most important items of consumption for survival, i.e. food. The Food Security Cluster classified the earthquake-affected areas into three categories: the seismic belt, the remote mountains and the southern belt. The monthly per capita expenses for food in normal times varied across all these geographic locations, with food expenses being much higher in remote mountains (NPR 2,100), as compared to the seismic belt (NPR 1,596) and the southern belt (NPR 1,340). As is evident from Figure 6: below, the per capita value of the ECTP

(assuming an average household size of four) was about 50% of the per capita expenses on food in normal times in the seismic and southern belts, and lower for the remote mountain area. If other basic expenditures, such as medicine, clothes, fuel and transport, and education were to be added to this per capita expense for food, the real value of the ECTP would appear to be considerably lower across all locations.

Figure 6: **ECTP top-up in relation to per capita monthly food consumption expenses**
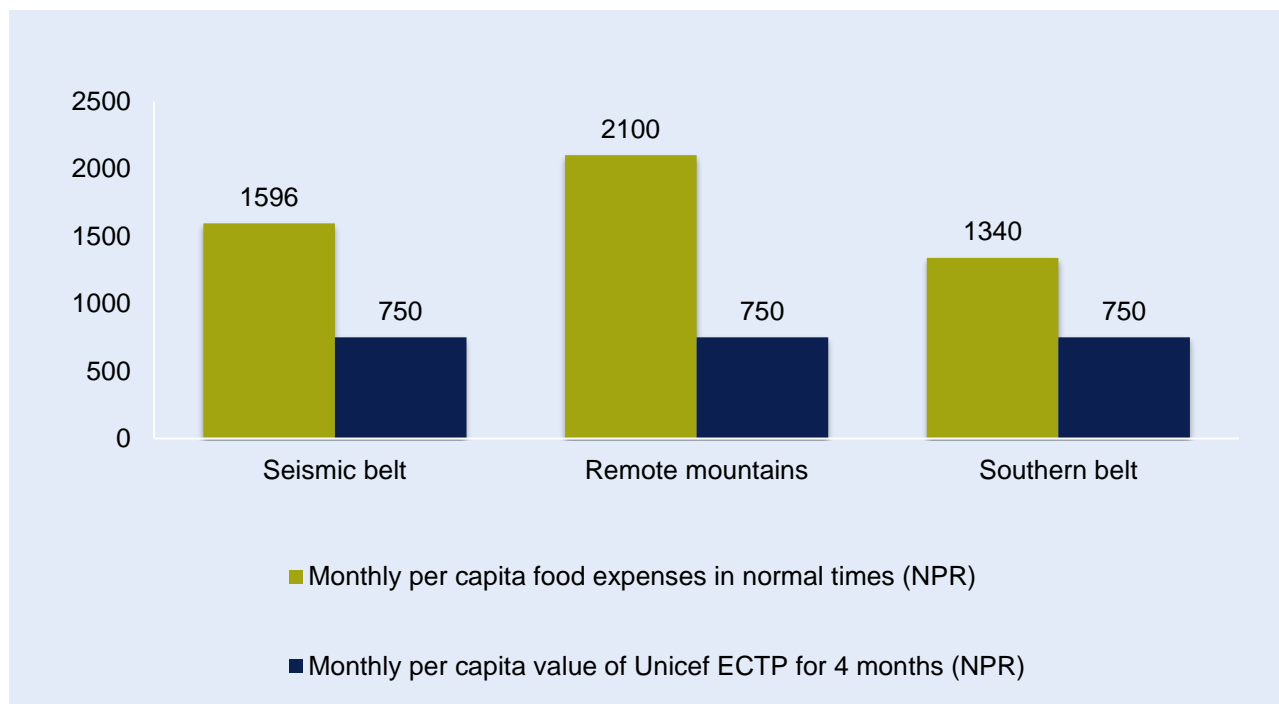
Source: Compiled using data from NeKSAP, Food Security Cluster and WFP, 2015, 'A report on the food security impact of the 2015 earthquake', May 2015.

The ECTP was smaller in value compared to other cash transfer programmes in the country that were implemented following the earthquake, including the multipurpose cash grant, [75] and the housing reconstruction grant (discussed in Section 1.1.2).

Given the real value of the cash transfer for households after the earthquake, some respondents reported that the amount of the UNICEF cash transfer was not sufficient to address the needs of the whole family. According to a government employee:

Amount is less than sufficient, it should be [NPR] 6,000 to 10,000. Though they provide cash to the individual but the whole family is the actual beneficiary. [Therefore,] I doubt whether social protection group are benefitted. (Village-/ward-level KII, GoN)

UNICEF staff at the centre also acknowledged the fact that the ECTP top-up amount was smaller in comparison to other ongoing cash transfer programmes:

[We] didn't hear anything in terms of particularly extreme responses in relation to the cash injections [through UNICEF], [as] the amount was relatively small in comparison to the amount being put in by other actors. The NGO's multipurpose cash transfers was NPR 7,000 per household and NPR 10,000 winterisation payments. It [UNICEF amount] wasn't that much compared to what people were already receiving through other sources … NPR 4,000

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[75] The value of the multi-purpose cash grant was set at NPR 7,500 for a household of five members. Thus, the per capita value of MPG was NPR 1,500. This represents just under twice the effective per capita value of the ECTP.

every four months for pension, and with the NPR 3,000 top-up, that's a maximum amount of 7,000 [that a household could get through the ECTP]. (Central-level KII, UNICEF)

Although the value of the ECTP payments was smaller than other cash responses to the earthquake, it is important to highlight that the UNICEF transfer amount was intended to be complementary to other relief efforts that were ongoing in the country, and thus was not meant to meet all the relief needs of an individual or household. Accordingly, 93% of respondents in the NEPAN PDM survey for Phase 1 reported also receiving relief support from other sources.

Target population

One of the main reasons for the relatively quick roll-out of the ECTP after the earthquakes was the fact that the programme relied on the lists of existing beneficiaries of the government's social protection allowances. However, a key limitation of using the existing lists of five vulnerable groups to target the cash transfer was that the earthquakes did not necessarily affect existing social protection recipients disproportionately relative to non-recipients. The UNICEF programme worked under the assumption that many socio-ethnic groups were affected equally by the earthquakes, and since social protection beneficiaries are already vulnerable, and other relief assistance packages were being provided to all earthquake-affected households as well, providing targeted support to the vulnerable groups would help address the needs of a precariously placed set of the population. However, the earthquakes' wide reach left a number of additional groups vulnerable in the immediate aftermath, and these were not all reached by the ECTP or other relief efforts. This targeting was also problematic in areas where everyone had been affected by the earthquakes, whereas only certain groups were eligible for this form of assistance.

While being aware of these limitations, UNICEF took the decision to focus on existing social assistance beneficiaries for a number of reasons. One reason was the aim to cover a large number of people in a short span of time, which was made possible by utilising the existing social assistance system. Given the challenges of working in a post-disaster context, it was also unlikely that any new beneficiary identification exercise would be able to correctly identify and include all earthquake-affected people. In addition, it was reasoned by the ECTP team that since there were other ongoing efforts to identify and provide support to earthquake victims, anyone affected by the earthquake but not reached by the UNICEF programme was likely to be reached by another programme. As a result, UNICEF provided support to existing social protection beneficiaries. A district official explained the impact of this selective targeting mechanism:

> *[This district] was the most severely affected district and a large population was affected by the crisis. Therefore, while the support reached those who were vulnerable, it excluded many households that were affected by the crisis. 90,000 households were affected by the earthquake and those on the social security list were 30,000 people, i.e. approx. 25,000 households…this is approximately 30% of the earthquake-affected people in the district.* (District-level KII, GoN)

A local government officer in another district cited similar concerns and called for clarity regarding the purpose behind the targeting:

> *This is not a good way to target the right people after the earthquake. If the target is to give it [the transfer] to poor people, then you can give the money at any time. If it is for the earthquake victims though, then you should determine the victims before distributing the money.* (Village-/ward-level KII, GoN)

Another implication of the targeting mechanism was that since registrations for the government social grants take place annually in December, anyone who was affected and made vulnerable, as per this definition, during the earthquakes was ineligible to receive the UNICEF cash transfer. This

potential for exclusion was recognised at various levels within UNICEF, though staff were of the opinion that income pooling within households would be likely to mitigate the adverse effects of such exclusion:

> *When designing the programme, we wanted to use the government system and to build upon it, so even if other people became vulnerable because of the earthquake, this was the only way to build a system…there is a lot of social support, so if an elderly person gets a grant, they share with their family members who have been more affected. So even if [the grant was] not completely targeted to victims, it still reached those who needed it.* (Central-level KII, UNICEF)

This model of income pooling could be effective in mitigating exclusion problems in circumstances where earthquake victims are also family members of vulnerable groups receiving regular social protection payments. However, the earthquakes have also created additional vulnerable groups who have been disproportionately affected and yet are not recipients of the cash transfer programme.

Despite mixed reviews regarding targeting within district and local government offices, the targeting mechanism was well received at the community level. Since the eligibility for social protection payments is well understood at that level, non-beneficiaries usually did not contest the fact that they were excluded from the top-up payments.

Perceptions about the cash transfer

The decision to vertically expand the existing social protection system to deliver UNICEF's cash transfer not only served to strengthen the relationship between UNICEF and the GoN, it also helped strengthen the contract between the state and its citizens. During a FGD, female beneficiaries expressed their feelings about receiving the cash top-up as akin to support received from close family in difficult times.

> *Respondent 1: After the earthquake we were in a bad shape and receiving the cash [from the government] then felt like we were being supported by our parents…*
> *Respondent 2: Sometimes it is not about the amount being transferred but the feeling that the government cares about us that is more important.*

Respondents at the beneficiary level were generally appreciative of the decision to distribute cash over goods, reasoning that cash is a good form of support since they can spend it how they please, while others were indifferent:

> *Respondent 1: Money [is better than goods]. So, I can buy the goods I like.*
> *Respondent 2: It doesn't matter to me if it's a goods or cash. They give clothes and goods and I would ask them to buy clothes from that money as well.*
> *Respondent 3: Money [is better]. I can wear and shop whatever I like.*

In line with the market assessments which influenced UNICEF's decision to distribution cash, beneficiaries in our research sites reported being able to go the markets, even after the earthquakes, and being able to buy the food, clothing, and medicine that they wanted. There were mixed views within local government regarding the appropriateness of cash as a means of responding to the needs of people after a disaster. Some respondents at the district level pointed towards the need for a more nuanced strategy when designing a national-level relief and recovery programme. For example, a district-level government official explained that although cash transfers are useful, they are not a panacea when it comes to addressing people's needs after a natural disaster, since markets are not functional across all locations:

The decision to provide money was good, because that is also the government's [social security] policy. People can utilise it as per their need, but it is better to provide goods to people that live in far-off areas since they don't have regular access to goods [markets]. (District-level KII, GoN)

This is in line with key findings from the market assessments, which found that markets were slower to recover in remote mountainous regions after the earthquakes. More frequently, government officials were critical of cash transfers due to their opinion that cash discourages people from working as they get used to receiving money without effort. Some district and local government officials felt that longer-term investment, particularly in infrastructure, such as schools, roads, drinking water, or other income-generation activities might be a better use of the funds than cash transfers to individuals. A few cited examples of people that had stopped working in the fields as a result of expectations that donors would provide them with funds to meet their basic needs.

This [cash support] is not good idea. This makes us dependent. Last year, one NGO brought a programme to give money to those who plant on their plot and their project was over after giving money. But people are waiting for money this year also…UNICEF has to invest on health sector, our present need is not cash, we need infrastructure for development. (District-level KII, GoN)

We found that most of the respondents who were against the idea of distributing cash were non-recipients of the transfer and operated largely at the district level. In some instances, non-beneficiaries at the community level also stated similar concerns, though this was not widespread. Global evidence suggests that cash transfers do not, in fact, discourage people from working.[76] However, the fact that this perception exists, particularly at the government level, needs to be addressed since it is likely to affect successful implementation of cash-based initiatives.

3.1.3   Implementation

Key actors associated with the delivery of Phase 1 of the UNICEF cash transfer were presented in Figure 5. One of the key features of the cash transfer was the use of existing beneficiary lists, as well as reliance on personnel who were already part of the existing social assistance delivery mechanism. This section discusses the challenges and success of this implementation approach.

Timelines and processes

Figure 7: below illustrates the various steps and activities which were part of Phase 1 of the ECTP. Beginning soon after the earthquakes in April and May 2015, Phase 1 disbursement activities lasted till mid-November, while financial reporting and reconciliation were ongoing till the first half of 2016 (Figure 7).

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[76] See for example, Bastagli, F. *et al.* (2016) 'Cash transfers: what does the evidence say? A rigorous review of programme impact and the role of design and implementation features'; Honorati, M*. et al.* (2015) 'The state of social safety nets 2015'. Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group; and DFID (2011) 'Cash Transfers Evidence Paper.'

Figure 7: **Implementation timeline for Phase 1 of the programme**
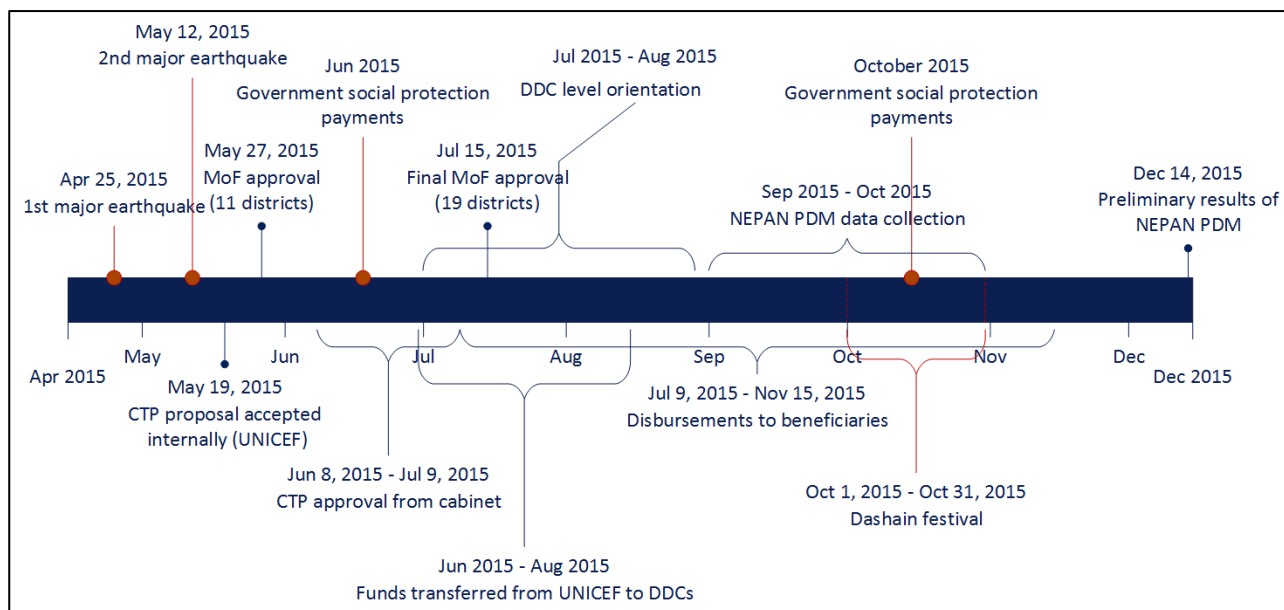
Source: OPM (fieldwork)

Orientation of DDCs

After the MoF and Cabinet approved the ECTP, UNICEF conducted orientation sessions for DDCs in all 19 districts between July and August 2015. At each orientation, UNICEF staff made a presentation on key programme features, and DDC roles and responsibilities, and distributed a two-page programme information sheet.

Release of funds from UNICEF to DDCs

The process of transferring funds to districts differed from the process used in regular social assistance payments since funds did not flow through MoFALD/DoCR. Instead, UNICEF transferred funds directly to the DDCs for reasons of financial transparency and the assumption that the process would be quicker, by removing any additional intermediary actors in the funds transfer process.

To get funds from UNICEF, each DDC had to submit a written request for funds by submitting a Fund Authorisation and Certification of Expenditure (FACE) form. This request outlined the budget breakdown per village and municipality in the district, as well as the total number of social assistance beneficiaries in each location. In principle, these details were already contained in the DoCR's database, as they had been using this information for their regular payments; however, raising a request for funds was unique to the ECTP. The UNICEF team worked very closely with DDC staff to help them complete their FACE forms correctly and on time, though there were still instances of incorrectly filled-in forms and delays in submission.

Upon receiving complete and correct FACE forms, UNICEF released funds to each DDC through a bank transfer, after which each DDC had a total of three months to distribute the money and report back to the UNICEF team on the number of disbursements made, and the details and reasons for any non-payment, and to return any unused funds. Both UNICEF and DDC staff confirmed that districts were unable to adhere to this three-month deadline of settling accounts in most cases. This stemmed largely from the time taken at the village and municipality level to disburse all the funds and report back to the district headquarters, as will be discussed below. Delays due to

reliance on banks also affected this process as banks sometimes intentionally delayed transfers, or faced liquidity problems, due to which DDCs and VDCs received funds later than expected.

Flow of funds from DDCs to VDCs/municipalities

To receive the ECTP funds, VDC secretaries and municipality CEOs had to write letters to the DDC, requesting the emergency cash transfer top-up amount for their village or municipality. The amount per village/municipality was determined based on the number of registered beneficiaries already receiving social assistance payments from the government in that locality, as per the December 2014 registrations. Upon approval of the request by the LDO, the requested funds were transferred to the VDC or municipality bank account by the Finance Officer at the DDC.

Flow of funds from VDCs/municipalities to beneficiaries

As with the usual social assistance payments, most of the funds were transferred from the VDC/municipality level to the beneficiaries through VDC secretaries or municipal ward secretaries. There were slight differences in the processes adopted by VDCs compared to the processes used in municipalities.

In the case of VDCs, the VDC secretary received the cash in his/her bank account. Since banks are usually not available at the village level, the VDC secretary withdrew the cash at the district centre. This was not considered to be burdensome since most VDC secretaries live at the district headquarters and are present there at least a few days a week, so were easily able to retrieve the funds. Upon withdrawing the funds, VDC secretaries carried the cash back to their villages, which in some cases were only accessible by foot.

In municipalities, a number of ward secretaries fulfil a similar role to VDC secretaries for their wards, and they report to the municipality CEO. In almost all municipality wards, the regular social protection payments are made through banks, and the same method was adopted for the top-up. The exact nature of the bank transfer varies across locations, based on the penetration of financial services: in areas where most social assistance beneficiaries have their own bank accounts, transfers are made directly into their accounts, while in areas where a majority of the social assistance beneficiaries do not have an individual bank account, banks set up a separate desk on their premises and disburse payments in cash to beneficiaries. For the ECTP in Phase 1, payments were made via banks using both these methods. In a very small share of wards within municipalities, ward secretaries carried the cash to their wards, where distributions were carried out in a manner similar to that in villages.

In the event of local-level disbursement of the top-up amount, VDC/ward secretaries were supported by community mobiliser(s) to carry out the actual disbursements of funds. Village officials would announce the dates of funds disbursement in public areas and rely on word of mouth. Most distributions took place at the VDC office. In remote areas, disbursement camps were set up at a few locations in the village, usually at ward level.

To collect their emergency cash transfers, beneficiaries were asked to bring their social security ID booklet ('*Bhatta'* card). No additional documentation was required to collect the funds. VDC staff noted the date, amount, and source of funds in each beneficiary's social security booklet at the time of funds distribution. Beneficiaries were asked to sign or put their thumb impression against their name on a central disbursement list carried by the VDC/ward secretary, to confirm that they had received the cash. In instances where beneficiaries were unable to come to collect the cash themselves, they were allowed to send someone in their place to collect and acknowledge receipt of the funds, especially if the other person had been nominated in advance, as explained by a VDC secretary:

There will be a nominated person on the [social assistance] card and they must bring their identity card and then can collect the cash [on the beneficiary's behalf]. We also recognise many people and know through whom the amount will go in the hand of the actual beneficiary. In some cases it is impossible not to give [the cash to someone other than the beneficiary] because some people live in different places for their treatment or some may have gone to a relative's house during the time of distribution. As far as possible our aim is to give to a relative [of the beneficiary] and if that is not possible then we give it to the nominated person. (Village-/ward-level KII, GoN)*

VDC secretaries had instructions to make all payments within 30 days of receiving the transfer, and were responsible for reporting back to the DDC using the existing reporting format provided in the social assistance programme operation guidelines, including details of the amount of money distributed, the total number of beneficiaries, and information about the balance. VDC secretaries mentioned that this was not always possible due to their excessive workload. According to a regional official, for instance, ward secretaries were responsible for catering to not only one but multiple wards. Although municipalities are thought to be central, urban spaces, in reality only a few wards are easily accessible, whereas a number of wards, even in municipalities, are rural and inaccessible, making it difficult for ward secretaries to fulfil their responsibilities easily.

We are supposed to settle the accounts for the bhatta in 35 days and this is not possible because people do not come [to receive their payments] on time. In many cases we have to go to their houses to distribute the cash. We also have other work to do. (Village-/ward-level KII, GoN)

Our informal observations in all four districts substantiated this claim, as VDC as well as ward secretaries were managing extremely high workloads throughout our visits. The situation was so dire in some instances that they did not even have time to review records to resolve any of the pending cases that came to them. In one district, for instance, whenever a citizen came with a query (whether to do with the earthquakes or not), if they could resolve it without having to find any additional documents from their records, they would try to address those queries, but if their requests required any back work, ward secretaries asked them to return in a few of weeks, when they might have some more time. The difficulties in regard to making timely disbursements can thus be contextualised and understood within the broader constraints within which local officials were working. Despite these heavy workloads, VDC and ward secretaries were usually very actively engaged in implementing the ECTP, and often walked great distances through difficult terrain to get funds to the beneficiaries.

Once VDC/ward secretaries had received the funds, disbursement took about two months to complete, though the time taken varied greatly across locations. Figure 8 below depicts the estimated number of beneficiaries reached per month. This shows that while most beneficiaries received their payments by October 2015 (five months after the earthquakes), others had not received their payments up until mid-November 2015, when NEPAN data collection terminated.

Figure 8:   Estimated beneficiaries reached over time
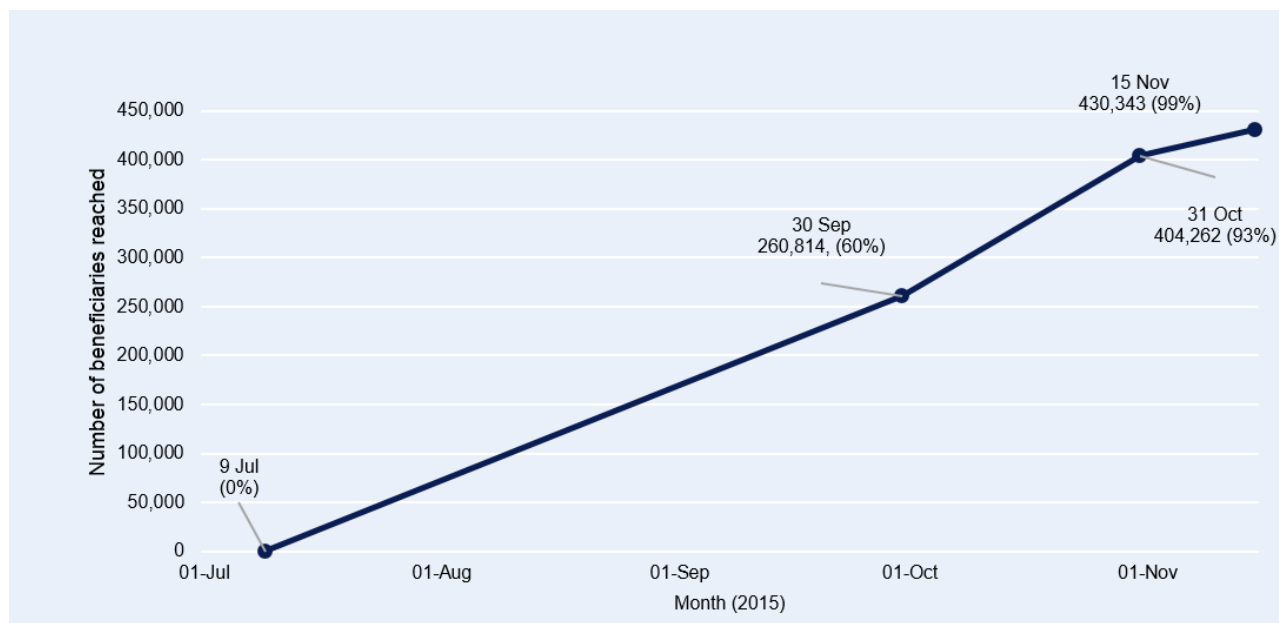
Source: Gurung, Y.B., *et al*. (2016), based on VDC and municipality reported completion dates.

There are a number of reasons for such long delays in funds disbursement. Since transfers were made to VDC bank accounts, VDC secretaries had to withdraw the transferred amount and carry it back to the villages to make the disbursements. In some cases, bank transfers from the DDC to VDC took as long as 25 days due to human errors in the paperwork. Additionally, the timing (July/August) meant that, with the onset of monsoon season, access to some areas was severely restricted. This was compounded by the fact that this is also the closing of the fiscal year in Nepal, and VDC secretaries were busy with settling annual accounts. In one district, the VDC secretaries had to wait till helicopters were available for them to be able to access their villages. All in all, the amount of the cash that VDC secretaries had to carry, coupled with the timing, meant that getting cash to VDCs was not an easy task. According to a local government official:

> *When it is related with money people are ready beforehand but it was risky for me as I had to carry 15–16 lakhs [about $15,000–$16,000]. It was really difficult to carry money during the monsoon.* (Village-/ward-level KII, GoN)

Another reason for the variation in the timing of funds disbursement across regions was because these decisions were made at the district level. The NEPAN independent assessment reports that in nine out of 19 districts payments for ECTP took place after the regular social assistance payments had already been made in June, but before the October disbursement. In eight districts, district and village/municipality staff waited until the next round of regular social security payments, i.e. till October, and disbursed the top-up at the same as the regular payments. In cases where the top-up was delivered at the same time as the regular social assistance payments, people were already expecting disbursement to take place, so once payments started the process was relatively quick. In instances where there was an additional round of disbursement specifically for the UNICEF cash transfer, the process was slower, since beneficiaries had to be informed about the additional funds and they had to make an extra trip to the VDC office to collect the cash. In some cases, VDC secretaries had to go door to door to distribute the cash to people living in remote areas of the village, which was also a time-consuming process, as explained in one KII:

> *For those who couldn't walk or come to the office, the Social Mobiliser and I go ourselves to distribute the money [to beneficiary households].* (Village-/ward-level KII, GoN)

In most cases, non-beneficiaries did not have much knowledge about the transfer amount and targeting mechanism, although beneficiaries and government staff were well aware of the programme. However, there were cases (in one research district in particular) where there was confusion about Phase 1 payments at multiple levels, ranging from the VDC secretary to the community mobiliser, and beneficiaries as well as non-beneficiaries. The confusion was so great that beneficiaries were either completely unaware of the transfer (even though it was marked in their social security book) or had not received the transfer at all. There were several lists maintained at the VDC office, but in our conversations with them, the staff were unable to provide clarity about why some of the beneficiaries had not received the payments.

Key findings

Timing of the 'emergency' response

As the timeline above shows (Figure 7:), cash assistance through UNICEF that was designed to meet the 'immediate expenses' of beneficiaries reached the earthquake-affected population as late as six months after the crisis. UNICEF has well established procedures for emergency response and this includes the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (CCCs). This document is a global framework that guides UNICEF and its partners' work in emergencies. Figure 9 presents UNICEF's conceptual framework for effective CCC response. The CCCs have clearly established timelines and sector wise commensurate actions for sudden onset emergencies. They state that:

- the first 72 hours involve actions required for management and operational processes;
- the first eight weeks involve actions relevant to critical response and early recovery; and
- early recovery actions in the CCCs are actions and approaches that should be applied immediately and in parallel with the immediate response.

Figure 9:   Conceptual framework for effective CCC response
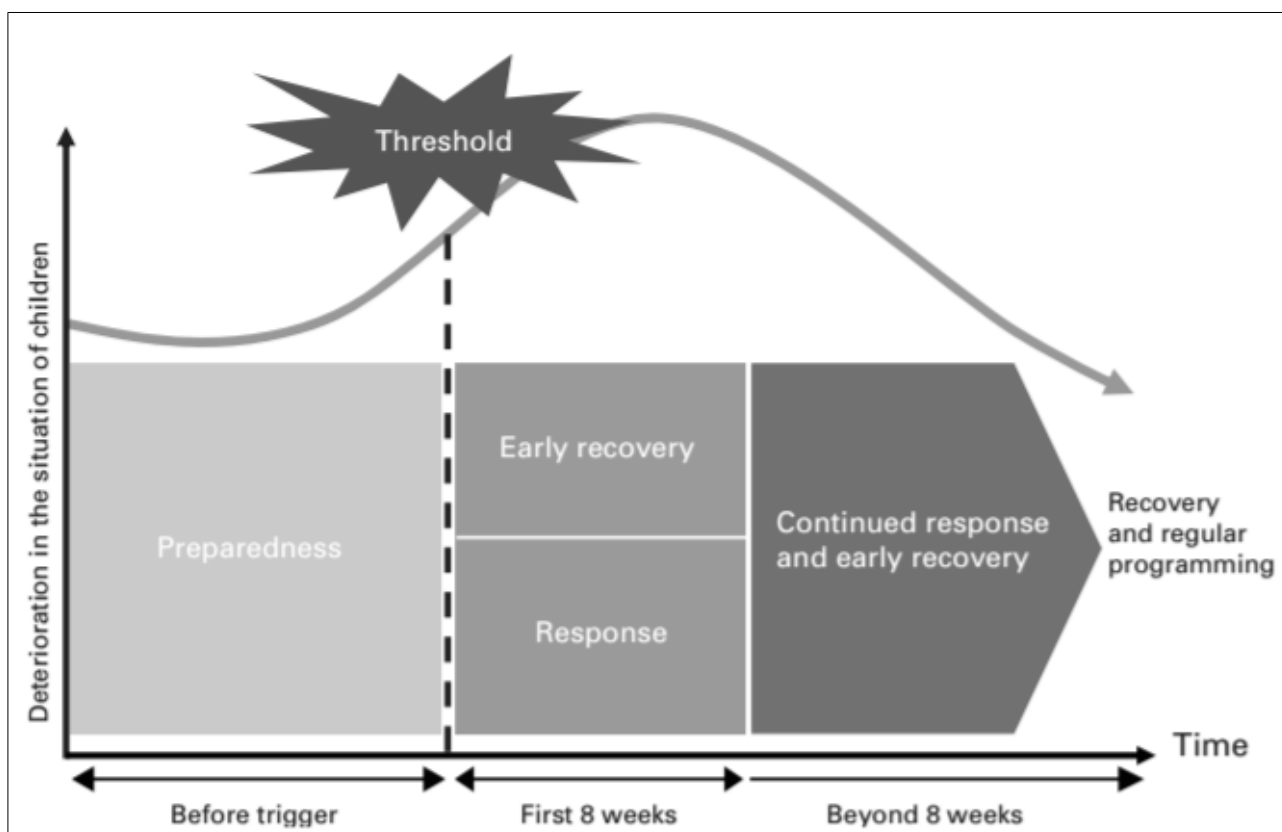
The ECTP took between three and six months to disburse cash to the earthquake-affected population. Although UNICEF's response was on a par with, and even faster than, many other post-earthquake response activities in the country, using UNICEF's own standards set out in the CCCs, this cash transfer would not qualify as a timely response for the first phase of humanitarian action. These guidelines specify that the response must take place within eight weeks of the disaster. Concern about the timeliness of the ECTP was raised by stakeholders at all levels, with some stating that the money would have been more useful had it come immediately after the disaster. A district-level government officer expressed this in the following way:

> *They [UNICEF] need to support the victims within one month of the crisis to make this programme even better…but this method is taking time, [as long as] three to four months. People don't get enough relief, hence the programme is less meaningful.* (District-level KII, GoN)

Challenge of synchronising payments with regular social protection transfers

One of the key strengths of UNICEF's ECTP was its reliance on the existing system. The intention was to synchronise the timing of UNICEF's cash transfer with the regular social protection payment scheduled for June 2015, to minimise additional administrative burden and costs associated with programme roll-out. This was especially important since the programme was coming in at a time when human resources at the district and local level were already stretched due to their role in coordinating various earthquake response activities. In practice, coordination with the June payments was not possible since DDCs and VDCs did not receive payment till July 2015. One of the main reasons for this delay was the extra month taken by the Cabinet to approve the programme and amend the design, which influenced when fund transfers from UNICEF to DDCs could be initiated.

In the DDCs and VDCs that received the payments relatively early, i.e. in July 2015, there was pressure to release payments to beneficiaries as quickly as possible. Since the regular cash transfer payments had already been made in June, officials in these districts carried out an additional round of funds disbursement for the top-up payments. As discussed already, this happened in nine programme districts, while in another eight programme districts ECTP payments were made at the same time as the October round of regular social protection payments. This was either because those DDCs and VDCs received the funds very late or because they actively decided to wait for the next round of payments (scheduled for October 2016) once they had received the transfer from UNICEF, in order to disburse funds simultaneously. Although this maximised efficiency gains, it was extremely disadvantageous from a humanitarian perspective since it meant that beneficiaries received the cash transfer months after the disaster.

Implications of capacity constraints

We found that VDC/ward secretaries in each research area were extremely busy, as they are involved in all local development projects in the country, whether they are government run or through other sources. Since local development elections have not been conducted in Nepal since 2002, the functions of elected representatives for each VDC also have to be carried out by VDC secretaries. A VDC secretary explained to us that it is impossible to make an exhaustive list of all their roles and responsibilities since they are so extensive:

> *The role of the VDC secretary is that he does the work of all the ministries that exist in Nepal at the village level. That means that this is burdensome and there is a lot of work to do. In addition to that, after the earthquake different organisations came to the VDC for coordination to help the local people. The VDC secretary's work lasts from the birth of an*

individual to the death of an individual. [Our] other activities including developmental works, vital registration work, finances, etc. There is no way to explain all the work of VDC secretary as you have asked. (Village-/ward-level KII, GoN)

This situation is further compounded by a shortage of staff in general, which means that some VDC and ward secretaries look after more than one VDC and/or ward. For example, in Sindhupalchowk, out of 68 VDC secretary positions only 32 positions were filled at the time of the earthquakes, making each VDC secretary responsible for at least two VDCs. UNICEF's cash transfer placed additional responsibilities of disbursement, monitoring and reporting on already over-worked government staff. This suggests that assumptions about the level of administrative burden on, and spare capacity of, government staff to perform the additional responsibilities imposed upon them as a result of the ECTP did not hold.

Financial institution coverage in rural Nepal is weak and for this reason most social assistance payments in VDCs are made by hand by the VDC/ward secretary. For the regular social assistance payments, this means that the VDC secretaries have to withdraw the cash from the bank and keep it secure until the disbursement is complete. This process can take a few weeks to complete and the responsibility for keeping the cash safe is not one that VDC secretaries appear to take lightly. Moreover, the programme required VDC secretaries to handle more cash than they were used to, adding to their burden.[77] In addition, the management of these funds involved some additional costs and logistical arrangements, which were not always accounted for by the programme.

> *To distribute NPR 1–2 crores [$100,000 – $200,0000] to villages is not a joke. To take cash from here to respective village we need help of police, have to give them lunch, fuel charge but UNICEF has not done anything on this. This office is for the public and our people should get this money… [But] they don't even cover our administrative expenses.* (Village-/ward-level KII, GoN)

A district official reported that DDCs have some additional funds of their own, so they could afford to provide an individual who is dedicated to implementing the programme. However, VDC offices usually do not have additional income of their own to dedicate towards programme implementation:

> *DDC is a big institution so we will do this. But there are lots of VDCs whose internal income is less than NPR 500 ($50).How could they manage?* (District-level KII, GoN)

There was no provision of additional administrative, transport or security costs at the VDC or ward level to facilitate the implementation of the ECTP. Several VDC secretaries and district-level staff complained about the lack of incentives to implement this programme, as well as the additional costs they incurred during this process. UNICEF staff reported that the decision to not provide additional payment to VDC and ward secretaries was driven by the DoCR, who viewed programme activities as falling within the usual responsibilities of VDC and ward secretaries, and therefore not requiring further remuneration or rewards.

DDC staff faced several challenges during implementation as well. According to one district-level respondent:

> *It [the ECTP] looks simple but it is complex. At the DDC level, immediately after the earthquake there was one focal point and one finance person who were managing the social security payments, handling visitors and NGOs, and managing the ECTP as well.* (District-level KII, GoN)

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[77] The highest transfer payments in social security at that time were NPR 4000 ($40) for four months for endangered ethnic groups, whereas the emergency cash transfer aimed to provide NPR 3000 ($30) per beneficiary. This significantly added to the cash held by VDC secretaries for disbursement, at any point in time.

Centrally, the DoCR were given a role in programme management, oversight and monitoring. However, they were responsible for implementing the social assistance cash transfers across the country and had limited time to dedicate to UNICEF's ECTP. At the same time that the cash transfer was putting additional pressure on government staff, UNICEF staff were also stretched thinly. At the centre, only two staff were allocated and were responsible for monitoring the programme in all 19 districts. A third staff member was assigned towards the end of the first phase. Immediately after the earthquakes, five UNICEF staff members from zonal offices were mobilised to provide support to, and to monitor, the ECTP for a period of two weeks each. Within each district-level site office, there were no designated personnel for the ECTP; rather, the focal person was assigned the responsibility to look after the cash transfer, on top of their existing responsibilities. Often the focal person was responsible for several districts at the same time. A district-level government official explained that this shortage of staff posed monitoring challenges at all levels:

> *This is a $20 million programme, about 20% of UNICEF's intervention in Nepal, and only three people in Kathmandu are looking after it…they can't go visit the programme and we can't either [as we don't have time…]* (District-level KII, GoN)

The fact that the cash transfer programme was implemented in an emergency environment, with capacity constraints at each level, meant that staff were unable to implement the programme as effectively and efficiently as might otherwise have been the case. The extra pressure on government staff, without associated rewards, meant that VDC and ward secretaries were reluctant to participate in Phase 2 of the programme without receiving some sort of financial compensation.

Use of banks not always desirable

At the central level, within government there was a general interest in shifting from cash payments to electronic transfers of cash grants directly into beneficiary bank accounts due to notions of increased financial transparency and a lower risk of misappropriation of funds. A central level stakeholder explained the reason for this preference within government:

> *The push for electronic payments could be due to all the news about funds leakage at the VDC level.* (District-level KII)

This shift was instituted within most municipalities from 2011 onwards. Although all municipalities are now supposed to disburse funds via banks, in some cases the system is not prepared to support this, since some municipalities do not have or do not use banking facilities yet. In a small share of municipalities, other forms or distribution are still being used.

At the village and municipality levels, most respondents, including local government staff and community members, were against the idea. This is because banks are usually located at the district centre, and shifting the mode of payment to banks means that beneficiaries have to travel to the district centre to withdraw their funds. This is obviously cumbersome for many vulnerable people, including old-age pensioners, who have to travel significant hours to collect their funds. Ward secretaries and other municipality officers were adamant that the shift to electronic transfers has made it more difficult for beneficiaries to receive these services, in terms of time spent waiting at banks:

> *This move [to the bank] might prevent misuse, that might be true, but it does not make it easier either. You go and see what it is like for people to go to banks and wait there just to get money.* (Village-/ward-level KII, GoN)

In addition, there are other burdens associated with travelling to the bank itself. To withdraw funds, individuals have to make trips from their villages, which can be both expensive and time-consuming. Concerns around access for old-aged and disabled beneficiaries were voiced in several research districts, as one ward officer explained:

> *How will old people come to the ward to get the money? It takes one day just to come to the bank, and some would have to be carried in a wicker basket to get here. You come all this way, then you have to stay in a hotel, pay for food…so you spend NPR 1,000 of your 4,000 just coming here.* (Village-/ward-level KII, GoN)

One of our research teams observed this while we were waiting to interview a bank manager in a municipality. An 80-year-old grandmother had come to the bank to check whether her social security pension had been deposited in her account so that she could withdraw the funds. She had come with her granddaughter, but she clearly struggled to climb the stairs to the second floor, where the bank was located. After taking numerous breaks to get to the bank, the grandmother was told that the funds had not been deposited in her account yet, so she had to return again in a few days' time. Although in principle bank managers often allow pensioners like her to nominate a designated replacement recipient so that they do not have to make the cumbersome journey, in practice, the bank manager reported that most people preferred to collect the money themselves, rather than designate someone else. Even illiterate beneficiaries would ask local shopkeepers to write cheques to themselves so that they could withdraw the cash themselves. The shift to banks had thus caused significant problems for some social assistance beneficiaries in regard to receiving their regular stipends.

Figure 10 below provides some information about the fund collection experience of beneficiaries in the first phase.

Figure 10:   Fund collection experience of beneficiaries in Phase 1
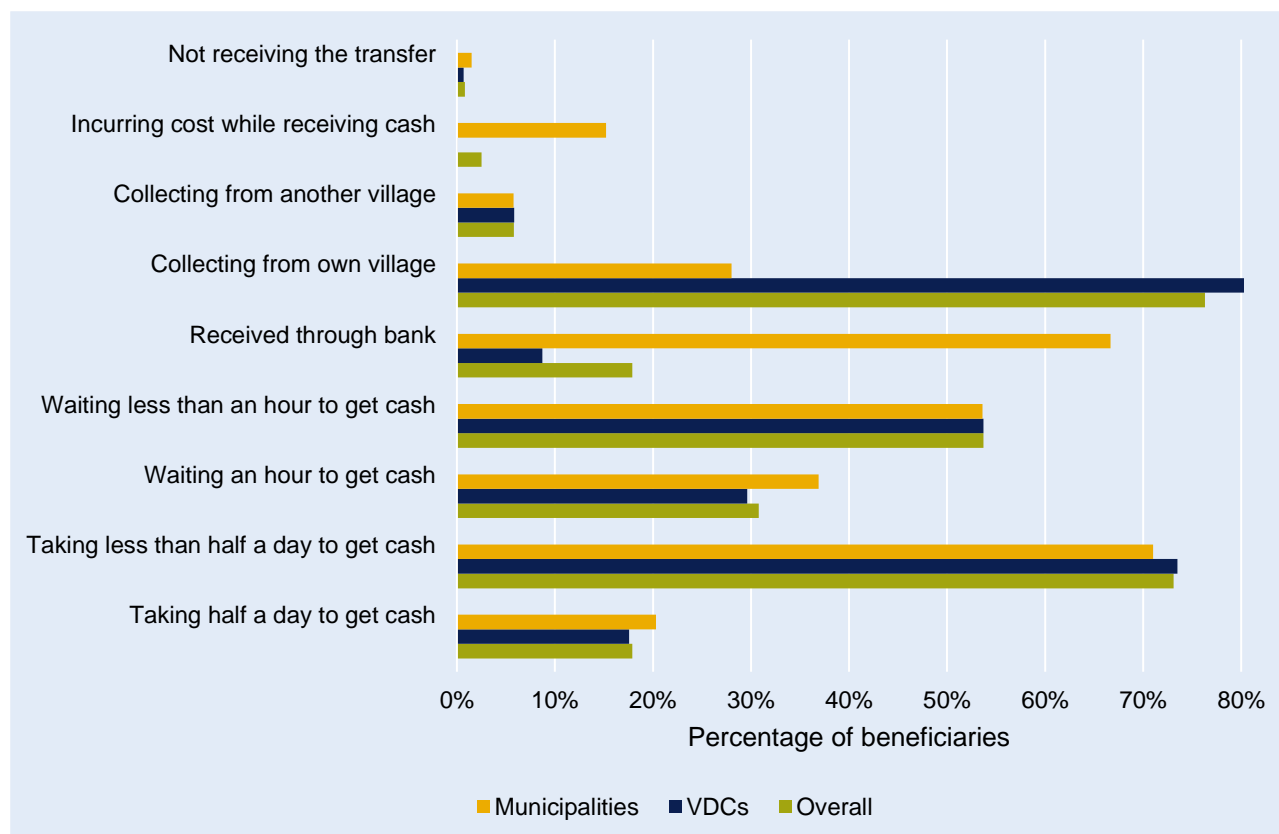
Source: NEPAN, PDM data, 2015.

Figure 10 shows that Phase 1 beneficiaries in municipalities received their cash grant through a bank more often than beneficiaries in villages. Municipality beneficiaries incurred costs during collection more often, and had to spend slightly more time getting the transfer. Most notably, although a very small share of beneficiaries (2.5%) incurred costs while receiving the cash transfer, over 15% of beneficiaries from municipalities faced some sort of cost in this process.

Some of the banks and regional officials have tried to address this issue by offering a branchless banking option to municipality residents who nonetheless live far away from the municipality centre. Each municipality has a number of wards, and only some of them have easy access to district headquarters where banks and government offices are clustered. Our research team found that some entrepreneurs teamed up with banks to offer branchless banking so that beneficiaries would not have to travel to the city centre to collect their payments. In essence, these entrepreneurs received the funds, as well as the beneficiary list, from the distributing banks, and then set up temporary disbursement centres in other wards (that are not in the district headquarters). Beneficiaries from different wards still had to travel to these branchless banking centres to receive their payments, but they appreciated the reduction in travel time. The entrepreneurs charge each beneficiary a fee of NPR 30, but all the beneficiaries we spoke to affirmed that they were grateful for the service and did not mind the nominal fee charged for this benefit.

Although branchless banking was not a major component of funds disbursement in municipalities, it helped address some concerns about capacity at banks. Since the earthquakes, pressure on banks has increased because of a number of different programmes targeting different beneficiaries. For instance, most recently, the GoN's reconstruction grant (with a first instalment payment of NPR 50,000 ($500) was being distributed through the same banks, which meant that there were long queues and banks faced liquidity problems. A ward secretary in one of the research districts explained that the capacity of banks has to be kept in mind when scheduling payments, since banks are currently overstretched and are informing them that they cannot make any more payments:

> *In the present situation, banks have their own problems. Banks have told us that, please do not deposit social protection fund before dashain, as we cannot distribute it. [This is because the] earthquake home agreement is also [being disbursed at the] same time, salaries for government officer are also distributed at this time…Because of earthquake bank's work load is too high…We cannot put pressure on banks in this situation.* (Village-/ward-level KII, GoN)

There were also reported incidents of cases where beneficiaries were expected to collect their transfer at the bank but did not have a bank account in their name, which resulted in further administrative hassles. This suggests that electronic transfers will not necessarily make the cash transfer process more efficient, and that the capacity of financial institutions is a binding constraint in this context.

3.1.4   Monitoring

Monitoring in the existing social assistance system is done by the DDC staff, through visits to VDCs and monitoring reports. UNICEF developed a comprehensive M&E plan for the ECTP in July 2015, soon after the ECTP design was approved. The M&E plan details the programme theory of change, outlines the results framework and key indicators for measuring programme success against intended outcomes and expected outputs, and specifies the intended sources of evidence for overall programme M&E. The M&E plan was designed to guide programme M&E activities, including real-time process monitoring as well as the monitoring of outcomes.

Figure 11 illustrates the multi-faceted programme monitoring system. UNICEF engaged actors at the centre, district and village/ward levels to monitor programme operations. From the centre, MoFALD/DoCR were involved in ongoing monitoring, while within districts, DDCs and NEPAN representatives were given this responsibility. Within each village/ward, community groups, scouts and media were used to share information on the programme and to provide real-time information on the process of implementation. In addition, other mechanisms, such as a SMS-based monitoring system, were introduced to seek feedback on the ECTP process at the beneficiary level.

Other than the process monitoring, a PDM exercise was also carried out, as per the M&E plan, to capture information on intended outcomes. This was conducted by NEPAN. The M&E plan also specifies a post-intervention evaluation, to complement the multiple monitoring activities.

Figure 11:   Phase 1 monitoring system
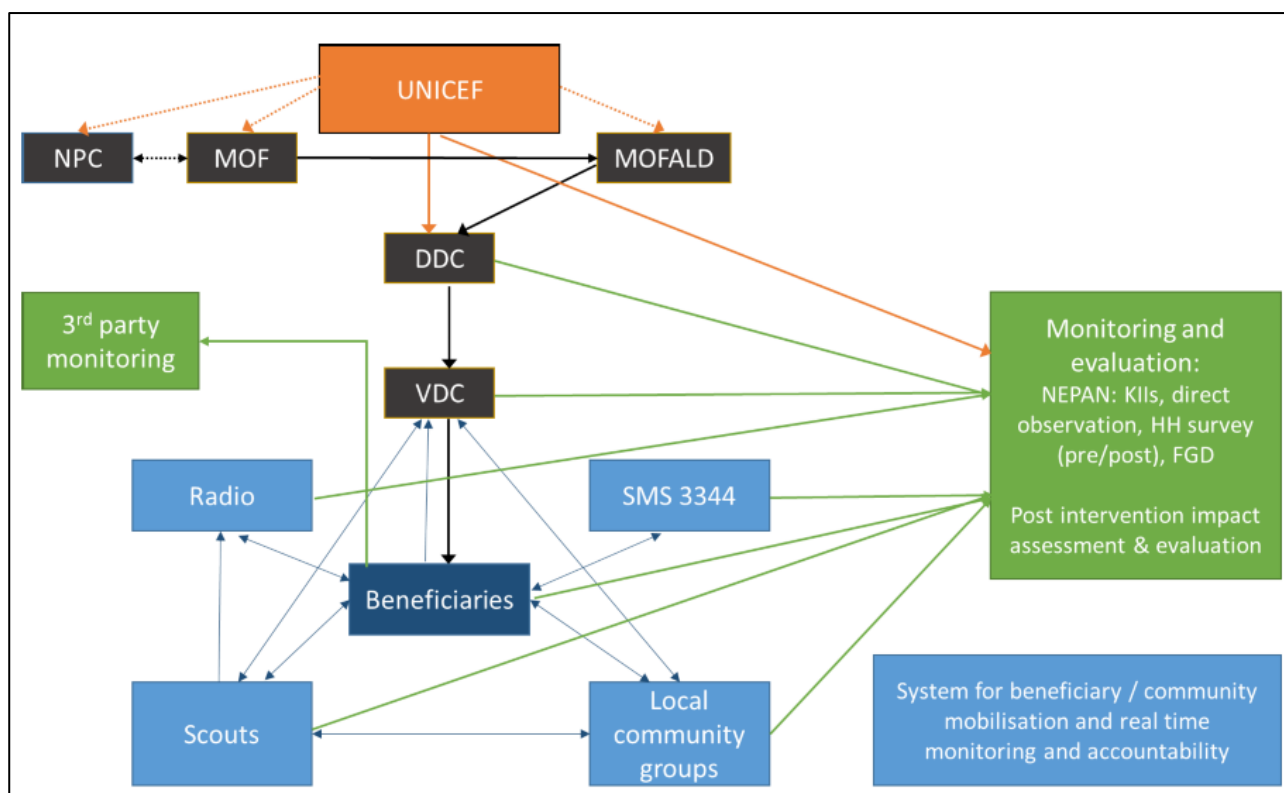
Source: UNICEF Nepal (2015) 'The Road to Recovery: Cash transfers for the earthquake affected vulnerable population through social assistance, Monitoring and evaluation plan*.*

The rest of this section discusses each of these monitoring activities in detail. Progress against Phase 1 expected outcome and output indicators, as defined in the M&E plan, has been consolidated and is presented in Table 10 in Annex B.

Real-time, internal monitoring

Although DDC staff regularly monitor the social assistance payments, and for that reason were expected to monitor ECTP as well, the primary responsibility for programme monitoring and consolidating the results rested with UNICEF and NEPAN. In UNICEF, this included central staff as well as the cash transfer focal person at the UNICEF emergency site offices. Within NEPAN, this included the NEPAN DFP in each district, who was responsible for monitoring operations and the central team that independently engaged in the PDM. Nepal scouts were also expected to carry out communication and monitoring activities.

The two UNICEF staff members looking after the cash programme centrally made some field visits and communicated with DDC staff and VDC secretaries over the phone as and when required. Representatives from the Emergency Unit at UNICEF were responsible for monitoring all of UNICEF's post-disaster responses, including the cash transfer. At each UNICEF field office, one person was appointed as the cash transfer focal person, though they were not always fully clear on the extent of their monitoring role. A senior UNICEF staff member explained this in the following way:

> *The cash grant doesn't have a dedicated individual in the emergency sites, but has a focal point person responsible for the work being done by the cash grant. Monitoring is everyone's responsibility but funds disbursement and collection is followed up by the focal person or the head of the office.* (District-level KII, UNICEF)

All UNICEF staff making field visits were provided with a multipurpose monitoring tool for the cash programme by the central ECTP team, and were requested to fill it in during field visits relating to any of UNICEF's ongoing programmes. The information collected by UNICEF staff was shared directly in the form of a field visit report or through monthly meetings in Kathmandu between the chief of the field office, emergency team and the SPEA team. At the district level, several government staff members, such as the Cash Focal Person and Planning Officer, also carried out spot-checks as part of their routine monitoring, though it was unclear who was responsible for what. A DDC official explained that dividing the responsibility among several actors meant that it was actually not being done by anyone:

> *There is no dedicated person for this programme…but monitoring of this programme was the responsibility of all, which means it was the responsibility of none since no one is there to monitor it in a structured way.* (District-level KII, GoN)

Most of the actors involved in monitoring reported questioning DDC and VDC/municipality staff about whether payments had been made, the reason for delays, and when the cash disbursement would be completed. DDC members seemed to have had greater engagement with UNICEF staff and respondents were able to recall by name UNICEF programme staff who had visited them.

Ongoing process monitoring was also carried out by NEPAN representatives (DFPs) in each district. NEPAN DFPs were hired on a four-month contract and saw themselves as fulfilling a coordinating role rather than an on-the-ground monitoring role. Accordingly, their engagement was largely at the district level. NEPAN representatives reported relying on the information given to them by the VDC and ward secretaries chiefly over the phone rather than through field visits to a sample of distribution sites, contrary to what was envisioned under the M&E plan. In instances where VDCs had not received funds from the DDC, the NEPAN DFP provided feedback in order to get funds released as soon as possible. At the end of each month, each district representative prepared a monthly report of information collected, mainly by speaking to VDC and ward secretaries on the phone, to be submitted to NEPAN centrally and to UNICEF district offices, indicating progress on funds disbursement and any complaints received.

Although there appear to have been many actors involved in monitoring the operations and progress of payments, very few village- and municipality-level respondents were able to recall monitoring activities actually happening in their areas. This could be related to the fact that monitoring was often combined with other work, which made it difficult for respondents to separately identify a monitoring visit. In addition, the scale of operations made it difficult for each location to receive a monitoring visit. This was verified during our interviews with NEPAN representatives in each district. None of the NEPAN DFPs we interviewed reported being able to visit more than four to five villages or municipalities in each round of monitoring. This partially stems from the fact that each district had only one DFP, and these representatives had also been

hired on a short-term contract basis (lasting for four months), signalling that there might have been capacity constraints in regard to carrying out effective monitoring in the districts. This points to the disparity between planned monitoring activities, what the actual coverage of monitoring activities was, given the scale of operations and dedicated capacity for monitoring, and what respondents at the community level were ultimately able to recall during consultations.

Most respondents outside of UNICEF were not privy to the findings from various monitoring exercises. NEPAN DFPs were unclear how monitoring reports were being utilised for programme improvement. For example, they were unable to report how their monthly reports were being used or to give an example of an improvement to the programme based on the monthly reporting. This is somewhat unsurprising given their short-term employment, but indicates a gap in the utilisation of monitoring information. UNICEF staff reported using this information to maintain a centralised MIS to track progress in programme implementation by district and to inform their conversations with DDC staff. This information was used by UNICEF staff to identify and alleviate the bottleneck causing delays in distribution and reporting in specific districts.

An SMS-based monitoring system was also set up, through which people had to register to provide feedback on the ECTP processes. This platform was rarely used, and very few beneficiaries reported engaging with this system.

Grievance mechanism

Phase 1 of the programme mainly relied on the existing grievance redressal system associated with the government's social assessment system and no additional grievance mechanisms were set up specifically for the ECTP. However, the phone number of a UNICEF Kathmandu staff member was printed on the programme leaflets. During Phase 1, since the beneficiary list was pre-determined, there were very few cases of discontent at the community level. In instances where people did have complaints, they relied on the existing system of communicating directly with VDC/ward secretaries and LDOs at the DDC or through the village leader.

Financial monitoring

There were three main financial monitoring processes: field visits, spot visits and an audit. Through field visits, UNICEF and other actors involved in monitoring ensured that funds were being distributed in a timely manner and in full. The Finance Officer at the DDC also carried out spot-checks during disbursement days. Lastly, the programme relied on DDC audits of VDCs and municipality accounts. This regular process requires VDCs to report back to the DDC on total disbursements made, reasons for non-payment, and the settling of any outstanding funds. The DDC ultimately reports on the usage of funds to the DoCR and is monitored by the Chief District Officer (CDO) and the annual government audit.

The DDC was also required to report back to UNICEF on total funds spent, and to return any unused funds. The process of financial reporting was often not as efficient as planned due to the fact that the flow of funds for the ECTP was through the same channel as the social assistance transfers, which led to confusion within DDC finance offices about how to reconcile the remaining funds:

> The DDC has to settle with us in six months, but that crossed nine months in some cases. Some DDCs deposited money in the government treasury and we had to work very hard to get that money back from the treasury. When new people [DDC staff] come in they don't know where to deposit the money, [and they] think it is government money. (Central-level KII, UNICEF)

The financial reporting for the regular social assistance payments is done every trimester and the DDC and VDC/municipality systems have been developed accordingly. For the ECTP, however, the reports from VDCs and municipalities were expected immediately upon liquidation of funds, owing to UNICEF's internal financial systems. In practice, financial reporting was not timely and liquidation reports were often submitted late to UNICEF, for a variety of reasons. First, capacity constraints were particularly limiting in the case of financial reporting and reconciliation: UNICEF staff lacked the capacity to adequately orient, train and support DDCs on the funds transfer processes, while at the same time DDCs had low human resources capacity to accurately meet UNICEF's administrative requirements. As a result, there were many mistakes in the requests for funds raised (via FACE forms), as well as in the financial reporting, so that revisions were required before the documents could be accepted by UNICEF's systems. Second, UNICEF's own internal procedures for fund transfers were complex and often prohibitive, leading to further delays. Third, there were delays in bank transfers stemming from the banks themselves. One UNICEF staff member reported cases of deliberate delays in disbursement from banks in order to increase the length of time deposits remained with banks. All these problems were further exacerbated by the scale of the operation, with funds having to be transferred to, and reconciled by, 19 DDCs and over 1,000 distribution centres. As a result, Phase 1 operations were further delayed.

The issues encountered while transferring funds from UNICEF to DDCs, how they were handled and risk mitigation strategies for the future, have all been captured in UNICEF Nepal's standard operating procedures (SOPs) on Expanding Nepal's Social Security System in Response to Disasters (Appendix 3). This document provides useful insights for cash programming in Nepal in the future, and highlights the reflexivity in UNICEF's approach.

The delays in financial reporting not only influenced the roll-out of Phase 1 directly, but also diverted staff time and attention away from regular programme operations, resulting in further delays in implementation. In addition, delays in reporting and liquidation of funds in the first phase had implications for Phase 2 activities, since UNICEF policies do not allow further fund disbursements to a partner until all outstanding accounts from previous transfers have been cleared and reconciled. As a result, district-level orientation or census activities for Phase 2 had to be put on hold until Phase 2 funds could be transferred in districts that were unable or unwilling to advance the cost of these workshops on their own.

Post-distribution, external monitoring

In addition to its ongoing process monitoring role through DFPs, NEPAN was contracted to carry out an independent sample-based PDM exercise, to gather information on Phase 1 coverage, functional processes, beneficiary perceptions, and the use of the cash. This involved implementing a quantitative survey to 880 beneficiaries in 11 districts, complemented by KIIs, FGDs and general observation. The information collected as part of this exercise was collected based on the logframe in the M&E plan, in order to track progress against programme outcome and output indicators.

This monitoring was meant to start after all the top-up payments had been made, originally planned for July and August 2015. However, due to delays in programme implementation, the PDM was shifted to September and October 2015. NEPAN hired staff centrally and teams of two to three data collectors were sent to each district for data collection. The staff received three days' training and were instructed to collect information on agreed formats and send filled-in forms to the NEPAN headquarters in Kathmandu. Researchers were given a strict timeline for collecting the monitoring information from each sampled locality, and were expected to complete one research area in 15 days, which led them to collect data in the evenings as well as during the day:

> It was a difficult task…We sampled [beneficiaries], it was difficult to find the members of the selected household…We had a target of 15 days to finish the task. We met them [the

beneficiaries] during evening time, [since] they would come home in the evening. (District-level KII, NEPAN)

The data were processed by NEPAN centrally and the final report was shared with UNICEF and MoFALD. UNICEF staff reported sharing the report directly with all LDOs and presenting the findings at the Phase 2 orientation session with LDOs in December 2015, at the joint MoFALD/UNICEF seminar on shock-responsive social protection, as well as at the Phase 2 orientation workshops with DDC, VDC and municipality officials. Despite the fact that the findings were shared on several platforms, none of the government or implementing staff consulted as a part of this research at the district or local levels mentioned seeing the NEPAN report. In fact, the respondents expressed displeasure that, despite having expressed interest several times, the report had not been shared with them.

This feeling of exclusion extended to district-level NEPAN representatives as well. For example, in our conversation with a DFP in one research district, the district representative stated that since the Phase 1 monitoring report was not shared with them, they were unable to provide a holistic overview of programme operations:

> *I will tell you in brief only because NEPAN [head office] did not share the report with us…During our training focusing on the second phase, we asked for the report…what were the findings of the monitoring? [NEPAN] did not share the report with us. They said they will share the report with us but did not share with us. That's why I will be able to talk about this district only. If I had the report I could have talked about other districts as well.* (District-level KII, NEPAN)

This suggests that while UNICEF made efforts to share the findings, not all district- and local-level government officials and NEPAN DFPs had equal access to the findings. Therefore, even though UNICEF were able to use this exercise to design Phase 2 of the ECTP, most district- and local-level stakeholders were unable to use the PDM findings and recommendations to inform their decision-making and approach for Phase 2.

The third-party monitoring did not always appear to be appreciated by government staff, who saw this as an additional burden – especially in districts that were severely affected by the earthquakes and had many visitors to deal with on a regular basis. Some officials also felt that external monitoring was a sign of a lack of trust in them. A UNICEF staff member explained his experience with LDOs:

> *LDOs said, 'You aren't trusting us – why are you sending so many people after us? We aren't going to eat your money…you are torturing our VDC secretaries by constantly asking them what they are doing…'* (District-level KII, UNICEF)

However, this quote demonstrates that the frustration, to the extent that it existed, was also in relation to the workload of the local officials, who had to fulfil further requests to support monitoring activities. Familiarising officials with the purpose of the monitoring, as was done during district orientation sessions for Phase 2, can be a useful step towards ameliorating these concerns.

The district-level NEPAN representative played no role in the PDM due to UNICEF's desire to keep implementation monitoring and PDM activities separate in order to minimise the chance for bias. We found that this separation was successfully maintained and in the districts we visited NEPAN DFPs were largely unaware of the survey exercise that had taken place within their districts. A consequence of this deliberate separation was that experience and knowledge of district representatives were not leveraged in the PDM survey exercise, and that the DFPs were unable to provide a holistic overview of all NEPAN activities in their district. In a context where turnover

within DDCs and VDCs is quite high, passing this type of embedded historic knowledge from one programme to the other can be incredibly useful.

Despite the fact that the PDM took place in 11 districts, including all of the ones we visited, and despite the fact that the final report was shared in printed form with (at least) all the LDOs, district-level staff had limited knowledge about the exact purpose of the PDM and how it differed from regular field visits. This could be due to a recall problem, or because, like other real-time monitoring, the PDM also focused on capturing information about, and perceptions of beneficiaries on, the operational aspects of the programme, so it is not easily distinguishable from other monitoring visits for the programme. None of the communities we visited were able to recall anyone coming to carry out monitoring activities, which is unsurprising given the scale of programme operations, with over 400,000 beneficiaries, of which only 880 beneficiaries were part of the NEPAN sample. In many cases, community members reported that our research team was the first team that had come to speak to them about the cash transfer, and they welcomed the opportunity to discuss their issues and concerns.

Overall, the PDM focused largely on the operational aspects of the programme and very little information was gathered specifically on programme outcomes in the M&E plan relating to households adopting harmful coping strategies and households recovering without undue negative effects on children. This remains a gap in the monitoring for Phase 1.

Cash largely used appropriately

One of the key themes explored by the PDM survey was how cash was used by beneficiaries (Figure 12). Our research explored this to a lesser degree, but found similar results. Beneficiaries reported using cash to pay off debts, purchase food, buy stationery or pay school fees, or to purchase silver or gold jewellery as a means of investment. When asked what the transfer amount was spent on, a group of Phase 1 beneficiaries reported as follows:

> *Respondent 1 – I used [the transfer amount] for food.*
> *Respondent 2 – I have to take medicine so I used that money to buy it.*
> *Respondent 3 – I bought a [gold] nose ring.*
> *Respondent 4 – My son and daughter-in-law take that money and they give me food and clothes.*

This was also validated by the NEPAN data, which indicated that the most common uses of the cash transfer was to purchase food (77% of respondents), medicine (45%), household essentials (35%) or clothes (31%).[78] The percentage of households using the transfer to pay back loans or to save was lower, by comparison. This is indicative of the fact that the cash transfer was mainly used to meet daily needs.

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[78] Gurung, Y.B. *et al.* (2016) 'Assessment of the Emergency Top-Up Cash Transfer Programme for Vulnerable Groups in Nepal'. NEPAN, Kathmandu

Figure 12: Use of cash by beneficiaries during Phase 1
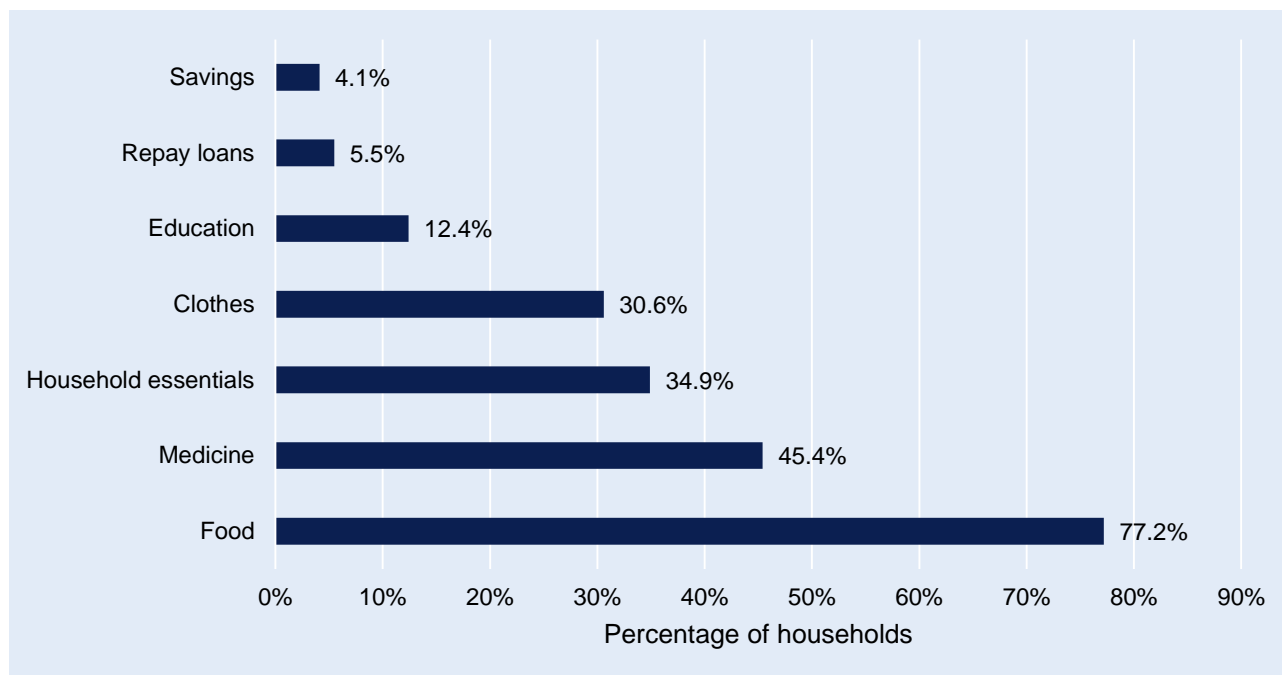
Source: NEPAN, PDM data, 2015.

There were very few accounts of the cash being misused. Most beneficiaries reported using the cash for meeting their basic needs in respect of food, medicine and clothing, and there was general agreement among most respondents that beneficiaries used the cash appropriately. Perceptions around misuse of cash were infrequent and were closely tied to ethnicity. A district-level official summarised the different uses of the cash:

> *Most of the people used this money for buying clothes, food, paying school fees. Old age people saved this cash… [but] a few Dalits bought alcohol. (*District-level KII, GoN*)*

Our research revealed ingrained prejudice against Dalits, a historically marginalised ethnic group. Perceptions that certain groups are more likely to misuse the funds existed at the district as well as local level. This is not evidenced in the data, however, and we found that all beneficiaries (both Dalits and non-Dalits) reported spending the cash for similar purposes.

3.1.5   Communication

The implementation of the ECTP used two main types of programme communication activities: those aimed at beneficiaries of the programme, and those aimed at actors involved in programme implementation. The programme adopted multiple means of communication with each audience, with varying degrees of success. Each approach is discussed in the section below.

Communication with beneficiaries

UNICEF sought to communicate with beneficiaries, in the first instance, to inform them about the ECTP and the eligibility criteria for receiving the cash transfer. Subsequent communication from UNICEF focused on fund disbursement dates and complaint mechanisms. Communication with beneficiaries took place through multiple mediums: local radio, Nepal scouts, leaflets, and local networks. Various actors, such as scouts, VDC staff, social mobilisers, education and health workers, as well as community members, were involved in spreading information about the programme by word of mouth.

Since the cash transfer was being implemented in selected districts, radio messaging took place through local radio stations so that only districts that were part of the programme received the messaging. A UNICEF staff member explained the challenges with using this medium:

> *We had to remain a little bit low-profile – had to restrict ourselves to radio messaging, not in national radio, only local radio which do not have coverage outside their particular district. We had to pick radio channels carefully so that info wouldn't go outside that district. Radio communication is very effective but coverage is limited – they don't often have coverage in all parts of the district, so we didn't know if we would be able to get our message to everyone.* (Central-level KII, UNICEF)

Though radio coverage is not ubiquitous, it was the preferred mode, based on the assumption that radios are more accessible than TVs or mobile phones. According to the NEPAN PDM report, one-third of the beneficiaries heard about the ECTP through the radio, while around 5% reported hearing about it through the TV. The prioritisation of radio over other forms of media thus appears justified. However, radio was not as popular within municipalities as in villages, and respondents expressed the view that radio is now only useful for reaching the older generation as others do not have time to listen to the radio anymore. However, it is possible that while radio messaging may not reach everyone directly, there is a high chance of radio messages being heard and further communicated through word of mouth to others.

The programme also involved members from Nepal scouts for the purpose of sharing information about the emergency cash top-up in the VDCs. Scouts are highly respected in Nepali society so it was considered a sensible decision to utilise the scout network to disseminate information. They were responsible for distributing leaflets with messages that promoted positive behaviours in regard to children's wellbeing and the reduction of vulnerability to future disasters. However, as the programme progressed, it became apparent within UNICEF that the use of scouts was not as effective as had been expected. A UNICEF staff member elaborated on the reason for this problem, which stemmed from UNICEF's inability, in a challenging post-disaster setting, to provide the scouts with sufficient training and support to fulfil their expected roles:

> *We need to understand the structure and the support they need. If we can't provide them the support they need, we will face problems. It was very difficult for us to provide that constant support and mentoring because it was an emergency situation and we were stretched thin.....We couldn't even go to the field to train the people. The training was half a day to a group of scout leaders and they were supposed to transfer that information to the scouts in their region. In some districts, the scout leaders were very active and were engaged at the district level constantly. Others gave wrong information which caused tensions (e.g. saying money was being distributed when it wasn't).* (Central-level KII, UNICEF)

Lack of support and training not only resulted in scouts being unable to carry out their roles, but also led to instances where incorrect information was communicated, causing further problems in implementation. In practice, most people heard about the top-up through the VDC office and by word of mouth from their neighbours, relatives, or local politicians. The VDC/ward offices relied on multiple avenues of communication, including through traditional messengers called to, who went from ward to ward announcing the programme. In addition, Nepal has a strong system of local governance, with each village being composed of nine wards. Representatives from each ward form a local body called a Ward Citizens' Forum (WCF). In several instances, VDC secretaries enlisted the help of WCF members to spread the word about the programme within their wards. The NEPAN data indicate that the majority of the respondents heard about the programme through formal verbal communication, including through the VDC office (63.6%), the WCF (7.9%), and scouts (less than 2%), as well as through informal means, such as through relatives (55.4%), school teachers (12.8%), and friends (11.5%).

Effectiveness of programme communication

Although various methods of communication were used to inform people about the programme, only a few respondents in our research were clear about the fact that they received the ECTP's transfer from UNICEF. This could be due to the fact that there were many programmes going on in these regions after the earthquakes, and that our research took place more than a year after the transfers had happened. However, it does signal a lapse in communication since respondents were able to recall almost perfectly certain programmes implemented by other donors which took place around the same time.

The concern here is not that UNICEF branding was not obvious in the provision of the top-up. The partnership with the government, and the subsequent use of the government system, was expected to lead to beneficiaries not always knowing about the source of the funds. Nonetheless, there was a lot of active communication informing beneficiaries that UNICEF and GoN were together providing the top-up. The fact that beneficiaries did not recall this signals that they at least do not remember or did not understand the messaging around the source of funds. This had further implications, as the lack of communication clarity was demonstrated when a number of Phase 1 beneficiaries enquired with us about when the next round of social assistance payment top-ups would take place.

In one of our research sites almost everyone at the village level was unaware of the ECTP, and the respondents were not able to recall the source of funds or the amount of the transfer at all. This included the VDC secretary (who had recently been transferred to this VDC), the social mobiliser (who had been in that role for several years but was convinced that the UNICEF cash transfer was of NPR 7,000 and was distributed in schools), and the beneficiaries of the regular social assistance programmes. We were unable to reconcile the findings from this particular district, since about half of the regular social assistance beneficiaries reported not having been paid the top-up amount. We examined the social security booklets used by many beneficiaries, which revealed that a number of their documents did not provide confirmation that they had received Phase 1 benefits.

It would be incorrect to attribute the confusion entirely to inadequate communication, since implementation gaps clearly had a role to play, as evidenced by the fact that some of the social assistance beneficiaries had not received the top-up payment. However, clearer communication could have been helpful, to identify gaps in the implementation phase. For example, if people were made aware of the programme, they could have demanded services from their VDC or registered their complaints.

All in all, programme communication with beneficiaries had several gaps in Phase 1. Though the long recall period could be influencing our findings to some extent, the fact that beneficiaries remembered details of other programmes implemented at around the same time as the Phase 1 ECTP suggests that the recall period is not the only factor driving our findings.

Communication with government

Given the conditions under which Phase 1 was implemented – that is, immediately after a large-scale natural disaster – UNICEF staff felt that it was not possible to involve district- and local-level stakeholders in programme design discussions. Communication through government was top-down in the first instance for the ECTP: UNICEF staff communicated with the DoCR at MoFALD, who passed information down to DDCs and VDCs/municipalities through official means, usually via a letter. This was followed by a phone conversation between UNICEF and a DDC official introducing the programme, after which there was an orientation session conducted by UNICEF staff in each district. Despite all these efforts, a few district officials that we interviewed reported being totally unaware of the programme till UNICEF visited to tell them in person that it was time to

implement it. This could be because within DDCs the responsibility for the ECTP was not always clearly assigned, due to different officials being exposed to different forms of programme communication, and therefore they did not have a holistic overview of the programme. Regardless, this is a problematic finding since this lack of knowledge is likely to have implications for implementation and programme ownership within DDCs. A UNICEF official explained the importance of this:

> *Ownership by local government is very important – one letter from the ministry is not sufficient – should have meetings and sessions. LDOs, VDCs didn't take very good care of the programme till things started going wrong and people and political leaders got upset.* (District-level KII, UNICEF)

The communication by the centre with district governments was weak, resulting in poor understanding of the programme at the district level. The DDC was responsible for informing VDC secretaries about the programme at their monthly meeting, after which the DDC LDO sent a formal letter to the VDC secretary to inform residents in their area about the programme. Since VDC secretaries were engaging with staff at the district, who themselves had limited understanding of the programme, they were unable to communicate the programme effectively within their villages and wards. These convoluted communication chains are likely to be a factor in why beneficiaries did not understand key parameters of the programme, such as that the top-up came from UNICEF or that it was a one-off transfer.

Lessons learned

Utilising the right staff

Reliance on scouts to do a full-time job was one of the major shortcomings of the communication strategy in Phase 1. A UNICEF staff member summed up the key lessons learned from this exercise:

> *We used scouts for delivering messages, but that wasn't very effective – scouts are volunteers and also have another full-time job. We expected them to do too much. That was another experience, to use the right people…If we had to do this again, we need to use local representatives who are influential in the area. Like female health workers or mothers groups, could think of different groups in different areas for communication.* (Central-level KII, UNICEF)

Instead of asking volunteers, there were other local networks that could have been leveraged to distribute information more effectively. For example, the use of *katwals,* social mobilisers*,* and WCF members proved itself to be very effective in villages where the VDC secretary decided to rely on them. The communication gaps in Phase 1 highlight the importance of utilising the right staff and not underestimating the ability of local networks.

Coordinating communication activities

There is a need to improve the coordination of communication activities within the system. For example, radio announcements in Phase 1 were not coordinated, initially, with actual payment dates in different districts; rather, all the announcements were made at the same time, which resulted in unrest at the community level since beneficiaries thought that VDC/ward secretaries were appropriating their funds. Although this was quickly rectified, district- and local-level officials recalled the implications of this poor coordination clearly since they were responsible for appeasing the beneficiaries who feared that they were being cheated. A DDC staff member explained the problem that this caused for VDC secretaries:

In first phase, there were few issues in coordination. When DDC received cash from MoFALD, UNICEF started broadcasting at radio jingle saying please contact your VDC secretary, [people thought that] UNICEF had already deposited cash to VDCs' account...It created misconception with VDC secretary. People frequently asked to VDC secretaries, when are we getting this cash. (District-level KII, GoN)

Hence, coordination failures sometimes resulted in miscommunication and further complicated the implementation of the programme.

Acknowledging capacity constraints

UNICEF developed two-page programme information leaflets and booklets with behavioural change messages that were intended to be distributed to beneficiaries at the same time as the top-up payment. These booklets and leaflets were printed by UNICEF and sent to the DDCs, where VDC/ward secretaries were expected to collect and carry them to their villages/wards. In a context in which VDC secretaries had to carry cash in bags and travel for hours to distribute that cash, carrying extra weight was not a viable expectation. Many VDC secretaries chose to leave the information material behind. In places where the leaflets and booklets did reach the distribution site on time, they were given a lower priority than the distribution of cash since the distribution of cash was in itself a stressful process for VDC secretaries:

When people hear about money they all come at once as if they are going to attack the Secretary. Secretary is worried that he will lose money. (VDC-/ward-level KII, GoN)

In this context the addition of another layer of work made the work of VDC secretaries even more challenging. This challenge was exacerbated by the lack of an incentive for them to engage in additional work generated by the ECTP. This highlights the need to acknowledge capacity constraints in the further development of this policy initiative.

Developing inclusive communication techniques

Although many communication activities were adopted by the programme, one key shortcoming was the exclusion of district- and village-level government bodies at the design stage. This resulted in the ECTP being perceived as a central programme that was merely adding to their list of tasks, and hence negatively affecting their motivation as regards implementing it. Had they been included as part of the decision-making process, the ownership at local levels, and subsequently programme implementation, could have been improved. However, since the programme was operating in the aftermath of a national humanitarian disaster, it is likely that district-level consultations would have been difficult to execute, as they could have led to further delays in implementation. They could also have been burdensome for district officials, who were likely to be involved in other relief work within their districts immediately following the earthquake. The balance between proactive consultations during the design phase and mindfulness about workload might be difficult to address in a post-disaster context, but should nonetheless be considered seriously to ensure greater buy-in and implementation success.

3.1.6   Coordination

UNICEF coordinated with other actors in Nepal following the earthquake, through its consistent participation in the national-level CCG. Soon after the first earthquake the CCG was set up in Nepal under the leadership of UN OCHA and supported technically by the CaLP in the first phase of the crisis. The CCG tried to bring all humanitarian actors working on cash programming under one roof to develop guidelines, share best practices and discuss practical implementation issues involved in working on cash programming in Nepal. UNICEF participated regularly in the CCG and

shared the concept of using the existing social protection system to deliver humanitarian cash assistance. In general, the group members appreciated the idea of working with the government system but also pointed towards the challenges of synchronising the concept of ECTP with humanitarian principles:

> *UNICEF's decision on using existing safety nets was discussed in the cash coordination group but there were issues with disproportionate prioritisation of areas and people which meant that areas that were not badly affected received the same resources/support as the areas that were badly affected. There were issues with inclusion of new people in the system. Nevertheless, UNICEF had a more structured approach because they had been working with the government prior to the crisis. It helps in strengthening the system [as compared to undermining it] but humanitarian imperatives have to be kept in mind – such as in targeting people and areas.* (KII, central-level)

UNICEF's participation in the CCG focused on sharing information, understanding what other agencies were doing on cash programming and also discussing practical implementation challenges. It is unclear whether UNICEF's decisions on the ECTP programme design, such as the value of the transfer amount, were well coordinated with the guidelines from the CCG.

Coordination within UNICEF was fairly straightforward since there was one person within each field office responsible for the cash transfer programme. The ECTP had some initial input from the Emergencies team during the design stage, but was implemented by the SPEA team, with limited coordination with the Emergencies team. Centrally, the engagement between the emergency unit and the social protection team implementing the cash transfer was limited to UNICEF-wide meetings, which were held during regular internal management coordination meetings for the emergency response, routine organisational meetings during the relief phase, or when chiefs of field offices visited the Kathmandu office. Although the ECTP in Phase 1 was building upon the social protection system, it was still operating in an emergency context. Therefore, continuous collaboration and engagement between SPEA and the Emergencies team centrally and in the field would have helped align implementation more closely to UNICEF's overall emergency response in the country.

Within each district there was a need to coordinate the efforts of UNICEF with those of other donors right after the earthquakes. Some districts had developed a one-door policy, where all earthquake-related activities had to be approved by the DDRC before they could be implemented. Though this placed an additional burden on the DDRC staff, it helped to maintain control of post-earthquake response efforts by multiple actors and to minimise duplication.

Among implementers of the programme within districts there was limited understanding of the concept of, and need for, coordination, and many actors reported that they were the only ones in their department working on the cash transfer so there was really nothing to coordinate. Although this was often the case within departments, it hints at a clear gap in understanding the importance of, and a weakness of the programme in regard to implementing, intra-departmental and intra-organisational coordination.
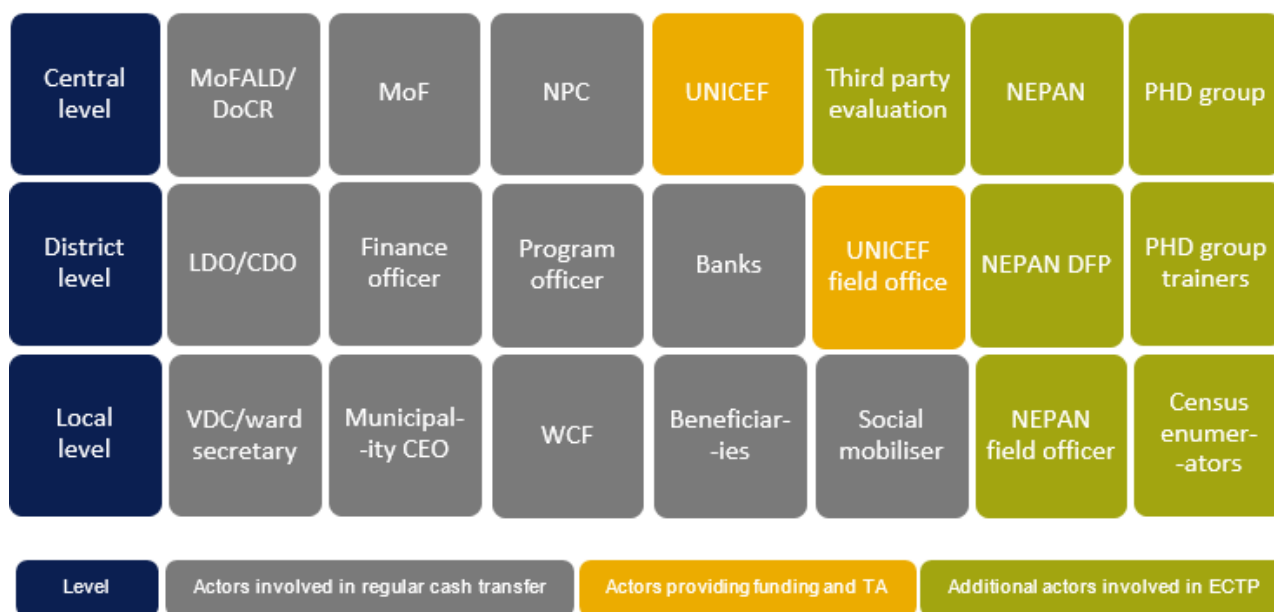
3.2 ECTP: Phase 2

3.2.1 Introduction

The second phase of UNICEF's ECTP in Nepal was intended to cover all children under five years of age in programme districts. Since the GoN's child grant is limited to under-five Dalit children,

expanding the grant required a detailed beneficiary identification exercise in all 11 programme districts.

As in Phase 1, the delivery mechanism for the cash transfer continued to rely largely on the current government social assistance system, and involved a range of actors at the central, district, and local levels (Figure 13). Most actors involved were already a part of Phase 1. The only addition was the PHD group responsible for the beneficiary identification exercise. Nepal scouts were not involved in the process during Phase 2.

Figure 13:   Key stakeholders in Phase 2 of the ECTP

Central level	MoFALD/ DoCR	MoF	NPC	UNICEF	Third party evaluation	NEPAN	PHD group
District level	LDO/CDO	Finance officer	Program officer	Banks	UNICEF field office	NEPAN DFP	PHD group trainers
Local level	VDC/ward secretary	Municipal-ity CEO	WCF	Beneficiar--ies	Social mobiliser	NEPAN field officer	Census enumer--ators

Level	Actors involved in regular cash transfer	Actors providing funding and TA	Additional actors involved in ECTP

Source: OPM (fieldwork)

The rest of this section is structured around the sub-themes of programme design, implementation, monitoring, communication and coordination. As with the findings regarding Phase 1, this section first discusses the process within each sub-theme and then presents the key findings from Phase 2 experiences. Consolidated recommendations drawing on findings from both phases are presented in Section 3.3.

3.2.2   Design

Motivation

The original programme document detailed Phase 1 of the programme but left the details of Phase 2 to be defined, stating: 'GoN and UNICEF may add another round of top-up payment and may review the selection criteria of beneficiaries and may include those who are newly eligible and/or not previously registered'.[79] The design for Phase 2 was finalised in December 2015, when all the Phase 1 disbursements had taken place and the process of financial reconciliation was ongoing. Expansion of the child grant in earthquake-affected districts under Phase 2 was specifically designed to serve as a means of transitioning from Objective 1 of UNICEF's ECTP – i.e. providing immediate relief to households affected by the earthquake – to Objective 3, which aims to achieve

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[79] Rabi, A. *et al.* (2015) 'The Road to Recovery: Cash Transfers as an Emergency Response to Nepal's Earthquake of 2015 and a Catalyst for Consolidating Nepal's Social Protection Floor.' UNICEF Nepal, Kathmandu.

longer-term strengthening of the social protection system for children in the country, in line with UNICEF's institutional focus on children.

The design decisions regarding Phase 2, including means of beneficiary identification and funds disbursement, were initially made centrally between UNICEF and MoFALD by incorporating the lessons learnt from Phase 1. The local- and district-level stakeholders were not involved directly at this stage, although UNICEF reported that their key recommendations from Phase 1 were considered during programme design. Plans for Phase 2 were shared in detail at an orientation workshop with LDOs from all 11 programme districts, near the end of 2015. UNICEF made some changes to the programme design in line with the feedback provided by LDOs at this workshop. For example, based on implementation delays as well as the feedback from LDOs UNICEF decided to drop the two-tranche approach to funds disbursement. Despite UNICEF's attempt to include district-level officials in the Phase 2 design the general feeling was that the programme was developed at the centre without their consultation. As result, district- and local-level government staff, particularly those that had not been part of the LDO workshop, reported finding it difficult to engage with a programme that had been imposed on them from above. One district official noted:

> *All the agreements take place in the centre, and we have to implement it. If they want to work with us, they should come to discuss with us...then it will work…they should discuss how to implement things in the district.* (District-level KII, GoN)

This quote highlights the complexity of cash transfer programmes and the different levels of actors that are involved in the implementation of the programme. While LDOs are ultimately responsible for development activities in the DDC, technical functions are performed by specific staff members, who may need to be included in planning and programme design in order to inculcate ownership for the successful implementation of programmes of this scale.

Transfer amount

The original design of Phase 2 planned for two instalments of NPR 2,000 to be paid to programme beneficiaries. However, there was deviation from this original plan due to logistical and administrative challenges faced in developing a list of beneficiaries (see Section 3.2.3), which led to delays in programme implementation. As a result, the disbursement plan was adjusted, with a single instalment of NPR 4,000 being distributed instead.

The value of the ECTP in Phase 2 was greater than under Phase 1 (NPR 4,000, compared to NPR 3,000). Despite this increase, and though nominally directed towards children, the Phase 2 transfer was again used predominantly as a contribution to household income, similarly to in Phase 1 (see Section 3.1.2 above). However, given the estimates on average monthly per capita total consumption, the average monthly per capita food consumption, and average household size (Table 8), and the fact that households have an average of one child under five years of age,[80] the real value of the cash transfer was still low against its stated objective of providing households with support to meet their routine expenses during the recovery phase.

Approximately 85% of the respondents in the NEPAN PDM survey said the transfer 'somewhat' made a difference to their household living conditions, while 9% said it made no difference at all. This indicates that the ECTP contributions were not significant at the household level. However, the Phase 2 transfer was intended to be complementary to other recovery and rehabilitation support being provided to households. In the NEPAN PDM survey, 63% of Phase 2 beneficiaries

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[80] Estimate based on NLSS 2010/11.

reported receiving some form of livelihood support, suggesting that there was potential for households to also benefit from other recovery efforts in their districts.

Target population

The intended beneficiaries for this transfer were under-five children in the 11 most earthquake-affected districts, with a maximum of two under-five children eligible to receive the transfer per mother, in line with the regular child grant policy. The transfer served as a top-up to the usual child grant for under-five Dalit children who were already receiving a cash transfer as part of the government's social assistance, while it was a one-off recovery payment for non-Dalit children under five.

The focus on children was well received by most respondents, especially at the community level. During an FGD with Phase 2 beneficiaries it was clear that they appreciated the approach of supporting children in all households:

> *Respondent 1: [It was good] the way they did this [cash transfer] equally because anyway the earthquake hit all of us, we were all sitting under tarps, kids were all experiencing the same, they were cold and we had to take care of them…they all had similar experience.*
> *Respondent 2: They give equal 'priority' to everyone, so that was good.*
> *Respondent 3: Yes, that makes me happy*

Non-beneficiaries also appreciated the targeting mechanism:

> *This was good for children. Many [children] did not have food or clothes, [due to this transfer] they got to eat. During dashain it became easier too [since] they got to celebrate the festivals.* (Village-/ward-level KII, non-beneficiary)

However, a small share of government staff and non-beneficiaries advocated for poverty targeting in the selecting of beneficiaries since poor households that were earthquake victims but did not have under-five children were unable to benefit from the programme. A senior government official commented that poverty targeting under-five children may have resulted in more financial assistance for those who really needed it:

> *If there had been an exercise to identify the right children, then instead of NPR 4,000 these children would have received more money. Due to universal coverage of the programme, people living in tents as well as living in big houses received the money.* (District-level KII, GoN)

Respondents on the whole rated the second phase of the programme as being better than the first one because they felt that it reached a greater share of earthquake-affected households.

> *Respondent 1: This second phase [cash transfer] helped more [than the first phase].*
> *Respondent 2: In [the] first, the social assistance group got the funds where we saw more people who consume alcohol and other extra expenses. But in second phase, children don't misuse the money. Parents who understand [the purpose of the transfer] have saved for their children. Therefore, I say this phase is more effective.*
> *Respondent 3: This time people are more conscious than previous time as it is for children.*

These responses also demonstrate a general suspicion that persists among people about the use and abuse of cash transfers in addressing post-earthquake needs. Nonetheless, the move to a focus on children was generally more acceptable to respondents, as all children were seen to have suffered and to be deserving of support in this context.

Perceptions about the cash transfer

As in Phase 1, while beneficiaries of the cash transfer were largely happy with the targeting mechanism, as well as the choice to distribute cash over goods, government staff, particularly at the district and central levels, voiced concerns about the cash transfer causing dependency among the beneficiary group (Section 3.1.2). Such respondents suggested that an income-generating activity or infrastructure investment specifically targeted towards children at the community level might be better than a cash transfer for recovery purposes. A senior government officer explained the view that institutional support for children is likely to be more equitable compared to universal cash transfers, which benefit the rich as well as poor:

> *Those whose houses have not been floored, those who are rich, they also get NPR 4,000. Those whose houses are completely destroyed, those who cannot buy school dresses, without stationery and good food, they also get 4,000. This is not fair…Those [poor] children should get institutional support, not individual money distribution.* (District-level KII, GoN)

In addition, during Phase 2 there were some concerns from village-/ward- and district-level government officials regarding the appropriateness of a cash transfer for recovery purposes. Such respondents were of the opinion that cash is suitable for providing immediate relief after a disaster, but that distributing money a year after the earthquake would only make people more reliant on external support. One official noted:

> *[Distributing cash is] okay after disaster…[but] cash distribution is not better for future because it makes people dependent, affects the psychology of the children, and minimises self-reliance. Nowadays it is hard to find people to work. People have stopped working as they have gotten used to eating for free…It would better not to distribute again [after Phase 2 distribution is complete].* (District-level KII, GoN)

Beneficiaries largely spent the cash on fulfilling basic needs in respect of food, medicine, and clothing. The NEPAN Phase 2 data confirm this to some extent (Figure 18), as most beneficiaries reported using the cash for food, clothes and medicine. Thus, the cash transfer was successful in meeting its stated objective of supporting food security during the post-disaster recovery and reconstruction phase. A very small share of respondents reported using the cash for house repairs (less than 1%) and on productive activities (approximately 2%). However, there was an increase in cash utilisation for saving and for repaying loans, as compared to Phase 1, suggesting that there were changes in (reported) behaviour compared to the last phase.

3.2.3 Implementation

This section discusses the implementation process for Phase 2 of the ECTP in detail, highlighting changes from Phase 1 as well as processes unique to this round of disbursement. Figure 14 illustrates all the actors involved in the implementation of Phase 2. As in Phase 1, the funds were released directly from UNICEF to the DDC, then on to the VDC/municipality, who distributed them to the beneficiaries.

**Figure 14: Institutional arrangements for Phase 2 of the ECTP**
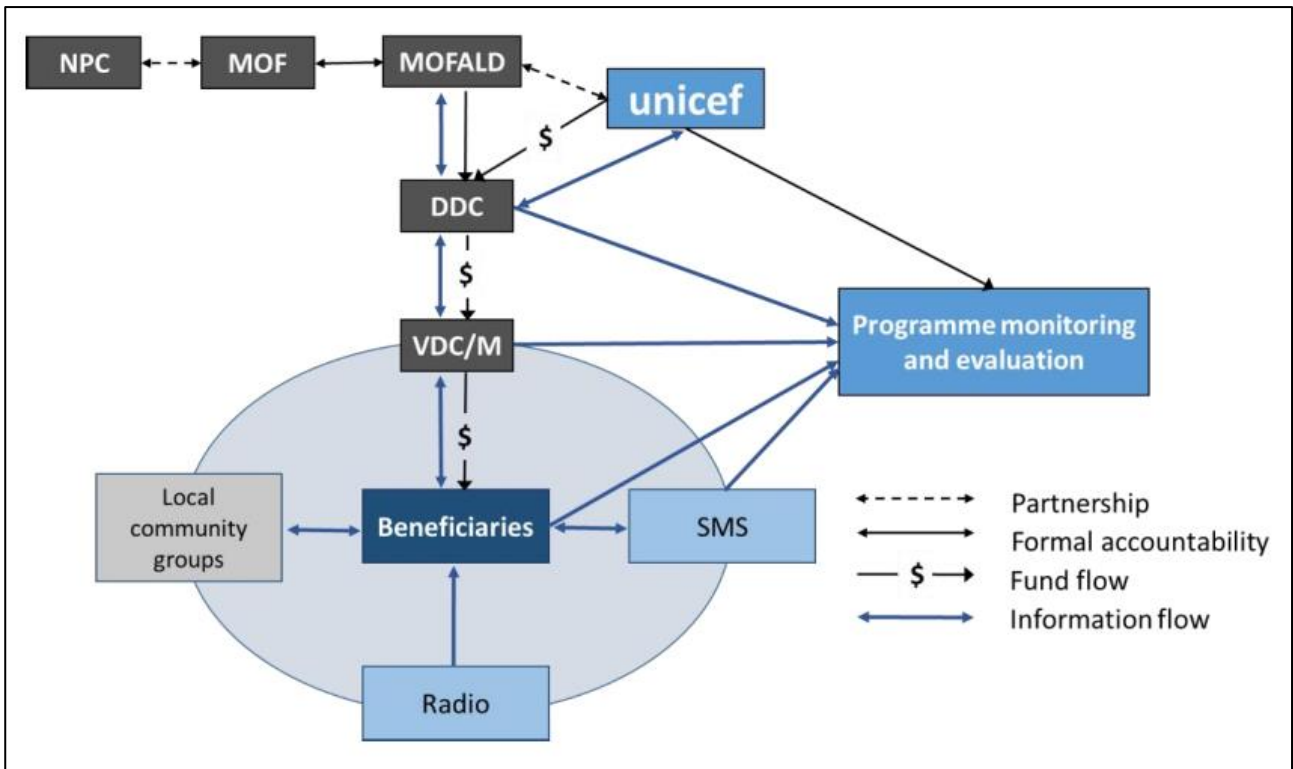
Source: UNICEF, Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, ECTP Phase 2.

Timeline and processes

Figure 15 illustrates the implementation timeline for Phase 2 of the ECTP. The DoCR communicated details about the programme to DDCs through MoFALD in the first week of February 2016. DDCs in turn wrote letters to their VDCs and municipalities, officially informing them about the programme. District-level orientation sessions for staff from DDCs, VDCs and municipalities were held in March/April 2016 for one to two days, with the objective of informing them about the second phase of the programme and soliciting feedback, especially in relation to implementation, reporting, monitoring and financial management of the grant. This session also involved discussion of the processes and guidelines for the second phase of the programme and participants were informed about the funds transfer process and the budget allocated for each district.

Although the district-level orientation presentation for Phase 2 covered the roles VDC/ward secretaries were expected to fulfil in Phase 2, most VDC/ward secretaries with whom we interacted in our fieldwork reported not being aware that they would be expected to disburse the funds until they actually received the payments from UNICEF.

Figure 15: Implementation timeline for Phase 2 of the ECTP
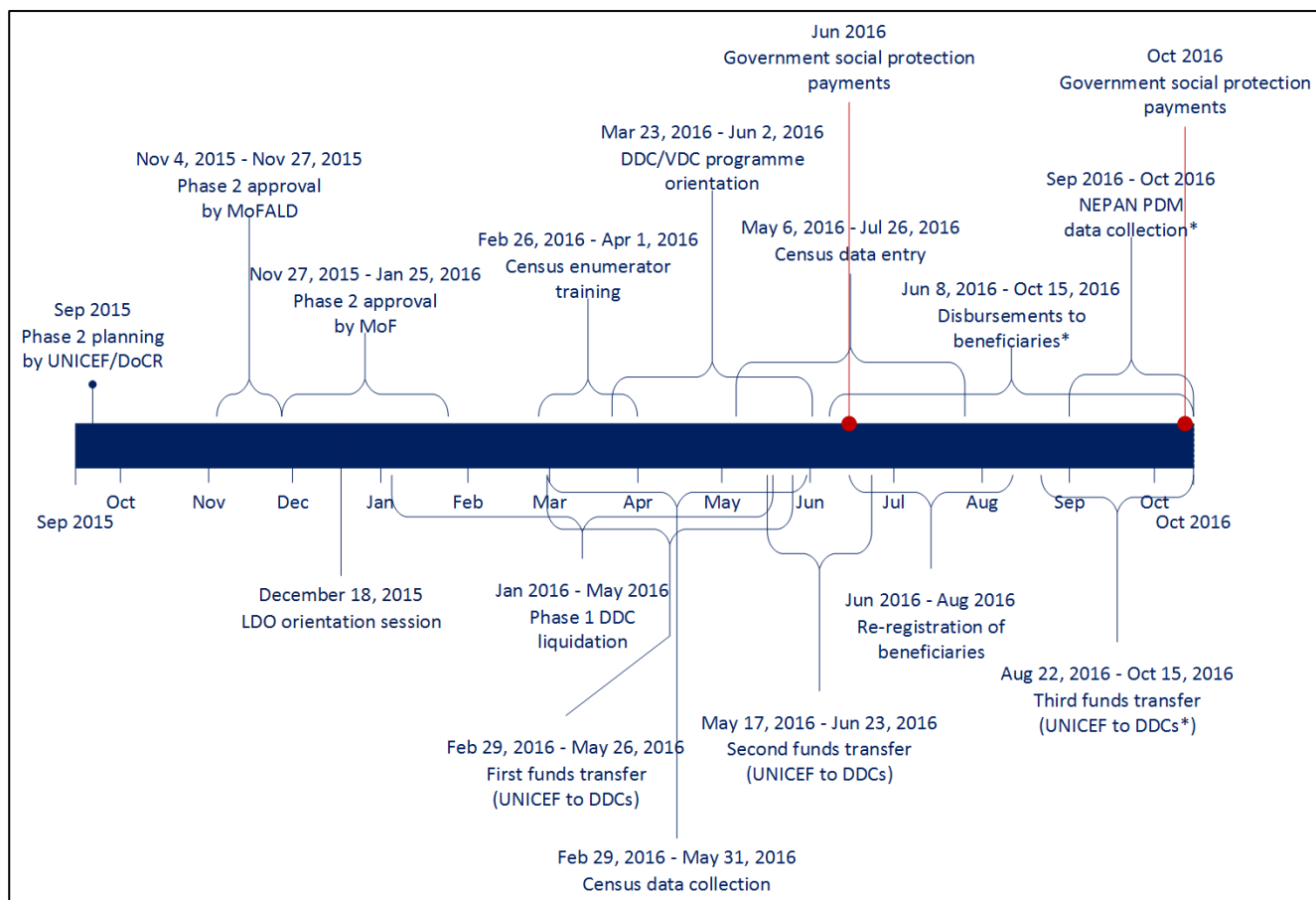
Source: OPM (fieldwork)

Note: * suggests process was ongoing at the time of OPM fieldwork in October 2016.

Since Phase 2 entailed a horizontal expansion of the existing child grant, its implementation required setting up more processes and systems than in Phase 1. The sub-sections that follow will first discuss each step chronologically from start to finish, and then provide a discussion on key findings, challenges, and lessons learned.

Census activity

As previously discussed, since the existing government social assistance database only includes a registry of Dalit children under five years of age and all children under five in Karnali there was a need to expand the database to include children in this age group across the target districts for Phase 2 of the programme. As a result, UNICEF organised and supported a household census to develop this registry.

Process

UNICEF hired an external firm, the PHD group, to work with the government to carry out a census to identify all children up to five years old in the 11 target districts for the programme. The DoCR sent a letter to each DDC with projections of the number of potential beneficiaries and households in each village/ward, based on the 2011 census. The same letter instructed village and ward secretaries to nominate potential enumerators for the census exercise. This letter was often only relayed to secretaries a few days before the scheduled enumerator training. The number of enumerators required per VDC/ward depended on the total number of households in that locality,

with up to five enumerators employed per VDC or ward. The only requirement for nomination was that the enumerators should have completed their secondary school (i.e. passed tenth grade). VDC and ward secretaries reported not being informed about the purpose of the enumeration or their own roles in the registration for Phase 2 implementation. As a result, different VDC/ward secretaries nominated different types of people for the role. In some instances, the social mobiliser or VDC secretary's assistant were nominated, while in other cases anyone from the community who was available to attend the training at such short notice was nominated. In some cases, VDC secretaries reported that since they did not know the purpose of the nomination they had suggested those individuals in the village who were in need of a salary, as enumerators were paid a daily wage of NPR 500 ($50).

All the nominated personnel were then invited to a two-day district-level training session in March 2016. The training was provided by district supervisors, who had themselves undergone two days of training by the PHD group. Respondents who attended the training were mostly familiar with the content of the training.

During the training, enumerators were instructed to go door to door to each house in their VDC or municipal wards to record the name, age, and gender of all members of each household. Enumerators had to verify the age of children using birth registration documents, where available. In instances where no formal birth records were available, enumerators were permitted to record self-reported ages, but were instructed to encourage households to get formal birth registration documents. In addition, enumerators were also instructed to collect information in regard to pregnant women expecting to give birth soon, so that children born during the implementation of Phase 2 would not be excluded. Enumerators were instructed to only include people who had been living in the district for at least six months. If a resident had moved from a different district or VDC, they were expected to provide a formal letter confirming their residence movement status (*basain sarain*) and that they were not benefitting from the grant in their previous area of residence, in order to minimise collecting multiple grants for the same children.

Enumerators reported that they were allowed to ask others to help them during the census exercise. In some cases, the nominated individuals sought help from other people in the community, even if those helpers had not attended the PHD group training. Each enumerator had a target of approximately 15 households per day. The total number of enumerators per VDC/ward was suggested to ensure that it would take no more than one month to finish data collection in each locality.

Data collection started in different districts in April/May 2016. The PHD group deployed supervisors to monitor the census, with each supervisor being responsible for eight to nine VDCs per district. Data collected by enumerators were forwarded to VDC/ward secretaries and, after their approval, they were sent to the DDC. From the DDC, the completed forms were sent to the PHD group in Kathmandu for data entry and processing.

At the centre, the PHD group consolidated the data and prepared lists of eligible beneficiaries within each district, village and ward. These lists were then shared with UNICEF centrally, who forwarded the lists to DDCs. The lists comprised the names of children, along with some key information, such as gender, location, date of birth, whether the child had a birth registration certificate, and contact information for the head of household. On the whole, it took about three months to complete the census process in the 11 districts and the census exercise was able to successfully identify and register roughly 85% of eligible beneficiaries.[81]

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[81] UNICEF (2016) 'Survey note on the ECTP post-distribution household survey', 07 December 2016.

Despite its successes, there were several problems in the census data, which started emerging during the data analysis stage. A senior official involved with the process explained this thus:

> *We thought we had done the whole district, but when we disaggregated by VDC and ward – saw that some wards had zero information. We found that sometimes we forgot to enter the data, or dropped them during sub-processing. In some districts, some wards were left out completely. When we compared with projections, we found that some enumerators had left out some households themselves. That happened in urban areas as well. I called VDCs and told them that some information is missing…but haven't heard back from them yet.* (Central-level KII)

Since the census exercise missed out a sizeable portion of children in the target districts, a second round of beneficiary registrations was carried out. We will first discuss some of the key challenges encountered in the census exercise and their implications for Phase 2 implementation, and then we will discuss the details of the re-registration exercise.

Key findings

Phase 2 implementation faced many challenges because the census exercise resulted in poor quality data and eligible children being missed out, leading to delayed implementation and frustrated communities. However, it is important to highlight that despite these hurdles Phase 2 implementation saw some key successes as well, including expanding the under-five child registry and undertaking the massive feat of universalising the child grant in programme districts. This section discusses the challenges encountered during Phase 2, and suggests means of addressing them in the future.

Poor system of data collection

The second phase of the ECTP required significant data collection activities for its successful implementation. However, a number of limitations crucially affected the quality of the data collected, with direct implications for the programme.

Within villages and wards, data collection was often carried out by individuals who had never carried out a census exercise before. VDC/ward secretaries were often asked to nominate individuals for the role only a few days before the scheduled enumerator training, and without having a complete understanding of the role requirements. As a result, they were often unable to nominate the best candidates. Furthermore, the enumerator training was very brief (three days), at the end of which many enumerators did not have a clear idea about their role.

In addition to its short duration, the enumerator training was not consistent across programme districts as the PHD group trained the trainers only, who were then responsible for training enumerators across the 11 districts. As a result, enumerators across programme districts were trained differently, depending on the trainers' understanding of the programme, the trainers' ability to pass on his/her understanding of the programme, and based on the enumerator's level of comprehension. For example, enumerators in some districts collected information on pregnant women, while others did not. Similarly, in some districts enumerators collected information for all households, while in other districts this was limited to permanent residents only.

There was some confusion about the end-date for eligibility as well. Although the intention from UNICEF was for enumerators to collect data on all household members, with additional detail on any children who were five years or younger at the time of the survey, this was not clearly understood by all enumerators. Some enumerators reported that they were instructed to only collect additional information on children born on or after December 2010, while others recalled that no specific cut-off date for inclusion had been conveyed. Respondents also reported receiving

contradictory information from different sources, which added to their confusion, and led to problems with regard to the comprehensiveness of the data:

> *In training, PHD group told us that children who are below five years should be included on the list. But after certain time we got an official letter from Ministry saying that children who are born after December 01, 2010, should be included. When this official letter reached our office, the data collection process had already commenced. This is the reason why the names of some children are missing.* (District-level KII, GoN)

The delays in the release and disbursement of funds meant that the number of eligible children under the age of five kept increasing as there were more births in the target districts. At the same time, some children who were under five during registration were more than five years of age by the time the disbursements took place. According to the programme design, anyone born on or after 01 December 2010 was eligible for the child grant, regardless of the disbursement date; however, this was not understood well at the local level and VDC staff reported age-related cut-offs as a reason for children being excluded from the child grant list. This led to significant confusion and frustration within communities, as explained by a local-level government official involved in the programme:

> *In the letter, they had said that we should register the names of children born from 2067 Mangsir 15. But in reality, the letter for payment came only from 2068, this is why a lot of people were left out. Now it is difficult for us to even go to the village. Everyone is very angry with us, the ones who are left out…and it becomes difficult for us to go there.* (Village-/ward-level KII, GoN)

Since enumerators did not fully understand the eligibility criteria they often either listed names that were ineligible or excluded eligible persons. For example, confusion about whether to include pregnant women in the census exercise also led to problems within communities once the Phase 2 payments started to be released:

> *Pregnant [women] were not counted during the census and then came to receive money because they had given birth between census and distribution.* (District-level KII, NEPAN)

A stronger system of field supervision during the census could have helped improve data quality. Even though PHD group deployed field supervisors, enumerators were often government staff, such as social mobilisers or VDC secretary assistants, who felt that they were not answerable to PHD group supervisors. As a result, they did not always respond to feedback and corrections, and in-field census monitoring was not very effective. A senior official explained this problem:

> *When the community mobilisers were trained and mobilised, and when they started doing the work, [PHD group] mobilised supervisors were supposed to check every enumerator for two to four days. That was our thinking, but it probably didn't work that well in practice because these enumerators were government people, so [PHD group] supervisors didn't have control over them.* (Central-level KII)

Our community-level interviews revealed that enumerators were not always following the guidelines communicated to them during the training, further highlighting the need for effective monitoring. For example, instead of going door to door, enumerators were going to key informants within communities and asking them about the number of children under five in any given locality. Many households were missed during the listing exercise because the enumerators only visited these households once, and if no one was home the enumerators did not visit the house again. During a community FGD, a beneficiary explained:

[Enumerators] go from village to village, but they only go to specific people. They sit with them and write everyone's names. They don't really go everywhere. Many people are not home either…usually [they did not go again]…if they were left once, then they would get missed out.

Even in cases where enumerators went to households, they did not always make the effort to collect correct information. The reward structures for enumerators were not organised in a way to motivate high quality performance. Enumerators were paid on a per day basis, with the expectation that each enumeration area would take no longer than 30 days. This incentive structure pressurised enumerators to finish data collection quickly in each area, without any guidance on the total number of children to be identified in each location. As a result, enumerators were inclined to gather data quickly, without much concern for comprehensive coverage.

Enumerators had to accept reported information since birth registrations were not a requirement for inclusion in the census. As a result, the names of children, as well as their parents, and their ages, were often noted down incorrectly. This added to inclusion errors at the time of registration for the programme.

Another factor likely to have affected the quality of data collection is motivation. Social mobilisers were involved in many ongoing programmes at the community level simultaneously, which meant that they were over-worked. In this context, the UNICEF ECTP required very technical inputs from them while providing relatively small remuneration. As a result, social mobilisers were less interested in spending their time on this particular project. According to a UNICEF staff member:

We gave them about NPR 500 per day for this work, but they were spoiled by [another organisation's] team. Their work started just before our work and the [other] team also used these community mobilisers, but did not require them to do anything technical. Just had to show which house is where, how to get where…were just guides. They were getting paid more than we were paying them [for this CTP]. (District-level KII, UNICEF)

As this discussion has shown, enumerators responsible for critical data collection did not fully understand the eligibility criteria. At the same time, it is also clear that the implementation of the programme through the use of this data also raises concerns about the design and community engagement strategies associated with the programme. This will be discussed further in subsequent sections.

Limited communication and community engagement

During training, enumerators were instructed not to reveal the purpose of the census due to the fear that if households knew the real purpose of enumeration they would have an incentive to lie about their children in order to qualify for the programme. The lack of communication regarding the purpose of the census meant that many households did not participate in the exercise or did not give correct information even when they participated.

They [DDC] had asked us for social mobilisers, so we used them. No one told us anything about the money. That's why people gave random names like Kale, Punte…some even said just figure it out and write something appropriate, so no one took it seriously… Many people said 'you took the data last time too. Nothing will come, so why should we give it to you?' (Village-/ward-level KII, GoN)[82]

As the quote shows, households were also not cooperative because similar exercises had been carried out several times after the earthquakes and none of these activities had resulted in much

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[82] These are common Nepali nicknames for children.

support for the intended beneficiaries in the past. As a result, households were hesitant about giving their time to another data collection exercise. This situation was exacerbated by enumerators being unable to explain the purpose of the exercise to households:

> *The government had already collected data from villagers at least two times. NGOs/international NGOs were also collecting data frequently. When enumerators went to villages, they felt irritated. Every time organisations collected data but villagers got nothing. Few villagers were not willing to give data. This is one of the major reasons for missed out children during household census.* (District-level KII, GoN)

While the lack of an explanation about the purpose of the census exercise helped avoid the falsification of data (so as to add unintended children onto the beneficiary list), the lack of clarity this created severely affected the implementation of the second phase of the ECTP.

Data entry and processing errors

In addition to the problems during data collection, which led to poor data quality, there were also certain problems at the data entry and processing stage. Enumerators were instructed to fill in forms using pencil so that any mistakes made could be easily corrected. Though useful in the field, this meant that data were lost (smudged, erased, and rendered illegible) during their journey from villages/wards to the DDC, and ultimately to the PHD group, as explained by one of the respondents:

> *Our social mobilisers went with engineers so they had to write quickly, so they might have made mistakes. They had to write with pencils as well, and when that process took months, then some of the old data might have gotten erased.* (Village-/ward-level KII, GoN)

The use of pencil also attracted a different controversy among villagers whose children were missing after the census. Many parents felt (or guessed) that enumerators deleted the names of their children and included the names of their relatives instead. During an FGD, some mothers hinted their suspicions regarding the data collectors:

> *FGD Respondent 1: From my house, one son is in the list but the other one is not. Do you think I only added one child and not the other?*
>
> *FGD Respondent 2: I wrote down the name of 12 children myself, but not all of them are on the list now…They are all children in the same house though, as people rent rooms here. Only two children's names came, but the rest did not.*

The above discussion further demonstrates the lack of clarity on the registration process, both on the part of the data collectors and the intended beneficiaries. It is possible that the enumerators only noted two children from the house, even though multiple households were living there. Since the intended beneficiaries did not know about the rule of registering two children per household, the enumerators could not explain the circumstances to them, leading to numerous unhappy families in each village.

There were mistakes in processing and typing the data as well. In a few cases, entire forms were misplaced, leading to missing data. In other cases, illegible handwriting resulted in names being entered incorrectly. Coupled with the confusion around eligibility ages, the funds VDCs and wards received were often for fewer children or for different children than they were expecting. This led to problems for representatives at the local level, who were the first point of contact for communities. Some of the bureaucrats were forced to come up with short-term solutions on their own initiative in order to appease as many people as possible:

The municipality did not receive money for all the children on the list…hence we calculated the ratio and distributed to different places, thus some households got money for only one child…UNICEF should understand the practical problem of VDC secretaries and the municipality CEO. (Village-/ward-level FGD, GoN)

Disbursement of funds

The disbursement of funds in Phase 2 again relied on the DDCs, VDCs and municipalities, with some slight changes. To support government staff in Phase 2 activities, UNICEF provided operational and monitoring costs of NPR 12,000 ($120) to each VDC, NPR 20,000 ($200) to each municipality, and NPR 40,000 ($400) to each DDC in the programme districts. In addition, some districts were provided with additional funds for activities such as enumerator training and VDC orientation sessions, depending upon the specifics of the particular districts. Though the recipients in our sample acknowledged this improvement over Phase 1, they felt that, given the additional administrative burden in Phase 2, this amount was not adequate to fully cover all operational costs incurred by the VDC/ward secretaries. For example, since none of the DDCs in our sample reported receiving funds beyond the NPR 40,000, they reported that the funds allocated to them from UNICEF for organising the enumerator training for the census were not sufficient. As a result, they had to dip into other budgets, leaving them with minimal funds for monitoring visits to the VDCs/wards, as explained by a respondent in one district:

[We are] trying to get the LDO to go for monitoring visits but they say they don't have any money for monitoring – the NPR 40,000 from DDC was used on the [district-level] trainings already. (District-level KII, GoN)

Similarly, the amount allocated to VDCs was quickly used up in transporting funds between the district and the village. In one instance, the person responsible for distributing the ECTP money was not aware of the additional funds intended for ECTP operations and was spending his own money to register missed beneficiaries and communicate with the district.

Release of funds from UNICEF to DDCs

The process by which DDCs received funds for Phase 2 was the same as in Phase 1, involving a written request for funds using a FACE form. The one change was that estimates of the number of potential beneficiaries were no longer based on the existing social assistance beneficiary lists; rather, they were to be based on the number of beneficiaries identified during the census. To expedite the roll-out of Phase 2, however, DDCs requested funds from UNICEF based on population projections before the child census was completed. Once the census data came in, estimates were revised and additional funds were released by UNICEF to the DDCs. UNICEF started releasing funds to DDCs in June 2016, around the same time that the census exercise neared completion.

Due to emerging data issues, beneficiary lists were revised multiple times. In some cases, payments from UNICEF to DDCs were released in part while the lists were still being updated. This led to further complications at the district and local levels, where payments were released for only a portion of the potential beneficiaries, and the officials had to decide for themselves how to allocate funds across villages and municipalities. In the event that the funds transferred by UNICEF were not sufficient to cover all the registered children across the entire DDC, DDCs had to submit another request for funds to UNICEF using a FACE form.

Flow of funds from DDCs to VDCs/municipalities

DDCs allocated funds to their villages/municipalities as per the census data list, which was supposed to determine the total amount received from UNICEF. Once the transfer had been made,

DDCs were responsible for informing villages/municipalities that the funds were available in their accounts. Funds were transferred to VDCs'/municipalities' bank accounts from the DDC around mid-July 2016. Municipalities transferred the funds to each of their wards in July 2016.

Flow of funds from VDCs/municipalities to beneficiaries

The list of eligible beneficiaries prepared by enumerators and validated by the DDC and PHD group was used to distribute cash to VDCs, municipalities, and ultimately beneficiaries, in each district. It was planned for the second phase of the programme to make payments during the June 2016 round of social protection payments, if not sooner.[83] In reality, the distribution process started in mid-July and was still ongoing in some districts in early October, when we carried out our fieldwork. As described earlier, one key reason for implementation delays in Phase 2 was that the beneficiary lists were often incomplete or inaccurate. Another reason for the delay was the late submission of liquidation reports for Phase 1 by DDCs, which meant that Phase 2 could not be initiated in these DDCs till all Phase 1 financial reporting was complete. Moreover, VDC secretaries struggled to locate households and children that had been identified in the census since the census exercise was largely completed by enumerators outside of the VDC. On explaining the difficulty of tracking children identified during the census, one respondent reported:

> *[It would have been] better if census-taker distributed the cash since he would know better whose names were taken, forwarded, and missing.* (Village-/ward-level FGD, GoN)

After receiving final beneficiary lists, VDC/ward secretaries were supposed to provide beneficiaries of Phase 2 with pre-printed programme registration cards. Beneficiaries were to show the card when collecting the transfers, as a means of identification. Due to delays in lists getting finalised, as well as the added burden of disbursing registration cards, most VDC/ward secretaries disbursed the cards along with the cash grant. Therefore, in order to collect the child grant, beneficiary parents had to show their citizenship card, in addition to their child's birth registration certificate.[84] An important difference between Phase 1 and Phase 2 was that all disbursements were made by hand and there were no direct transfers to beneficiary bank accounts, given the fact that most of the Phase 2 beneficiaries are not recipients of the regular government social assistance, so their bank account details were not readily available.

Some issues arose at the time of fund distribution; different DDCS, VDCs and wards handled these issues differently. For example, in cases where there were mismatches between the child's name and the parent's name due to enumerator or data processor error, some DDCs instructed VDC/ward secretaries that if the names of at least one of the parents was correct, then the beneficiaries could obtain a certificate from the ward office. The payment could then be made to the beneficiaries on that basis. In other VDCs, the VDC secretary directly made the payment if at least one of the names was correct.

Re-registration of beneficiaries

During the data consolidation stage it became clear that the census data had missing information for certain wards or villages. In addition, VDC/ward secretaries usually displayed lists of eligible beneficiaries in the VDC/ward office to inform beneficiaries that they were going to receive a cash grant soon. Once these lists were displayed, or once disbursement started against the first list, people began to understand the eligibility criteria. As a result of this knowledge, a lot of people with

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[83] The implementation guidelines state that the distribution must be complete by 30 June 2016 at the latest.
[84] As discussed, at the time of the census households were allowed to provide reported ages of the child with the expectation that in order to actually receive the transfer they would have to arrange for a birth registration certificate to be available.

children under five, but who were not on the first list, approached VDC/ward officials to ask why they had been excluded and how they could register as beneficiaries.

VDC and municipal ward secretaries adopted different methods for the second round of beneficiary registration. Some secretaries started populating a list of those excluded from the census during the disbursement activity, while others asked parents to submit a written application, complete with the child's birth certificate and their own citizenship cards. VDCs forwarded the lists and applications to DDCs, mostly on an *ad hoc* basis, with the result that each VDC/ward sent multiple lists of new beneficiaries to the DDC. The cut-off date for all VDCs/municipalities to send their final lists of excluded beneficiaries was in August 2016. However, none of the VDC/ward secretaries we visited were aware of this and some were still in the process of adding new people to the list at the time of our fieldwork.[85]

Based on the sample survey, about 77% of the children were covered by the census across all 11 programme districts, whereas the remaining 23% were identified by the re-registration process.[86] In one district, the re-registration list in some areas included as many as 90% more children than the census, as reported by a UNICEF staff member:

> *Before distribution people come to know when they visited to VDCs and complained and… DDC [had] to send the list of missed out child and again informed people to register if there were any missing [children]…If there are still missing children then they have lost the opportunity [to register for Phase 2]. In some VDCs, [there were] 97% missed children from the original list. LDO said it does not seem real… [monitors] went to three to four VDCs and found that they were genuinely missing children.* (District-level KII, UNICEF)

In this particular case, UNICEF and DDC staff were confident that these lists of additional registered beneficiaries were genuine since they had verified a few seemingly questionable cases and found that most of the new registrations were valid.

On the whole, there was noticeable variation across districts on how successfully the census identified and registered all children under the age of five. Figure 16 displays the percentage of beneficiaries registered in each district by type of registration process. The number of beneficiaries added during the re-registration process ranges from 7% (in Okhaldunga) to approximately 38% (in Rasuwa).

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[85] The 'Survey note on the ECTP post-distribution household survey', 07 December 2016, notes that two districts failed to submit the data on additional children on time, and were therefore only provided payments for census children.
[86] UNICEF's own administrative data indicate that 15% of total children were identified through the re-registration process. However, these data exclude additional registered children from Sindupalchowk and Makwanpur districts, while the PDM survey included children from the un-submitted additional lists of children from these districts.

Figure 16:   Percent of beneficiaries, by registration type and district
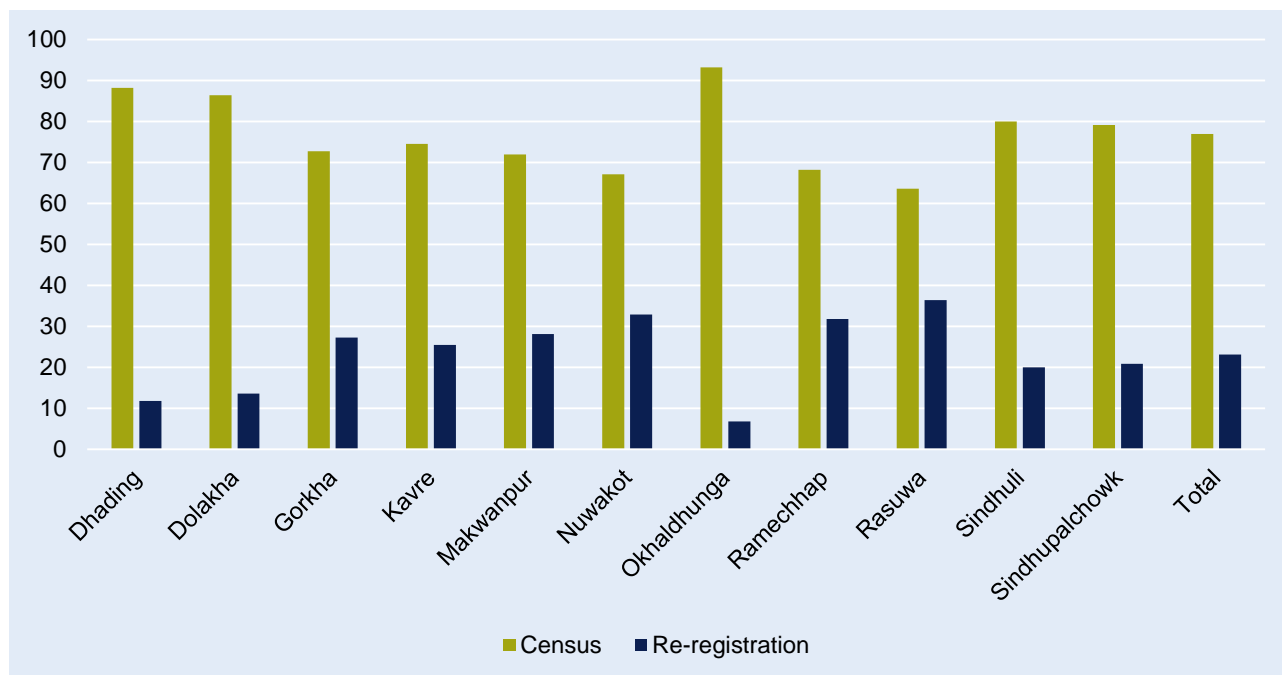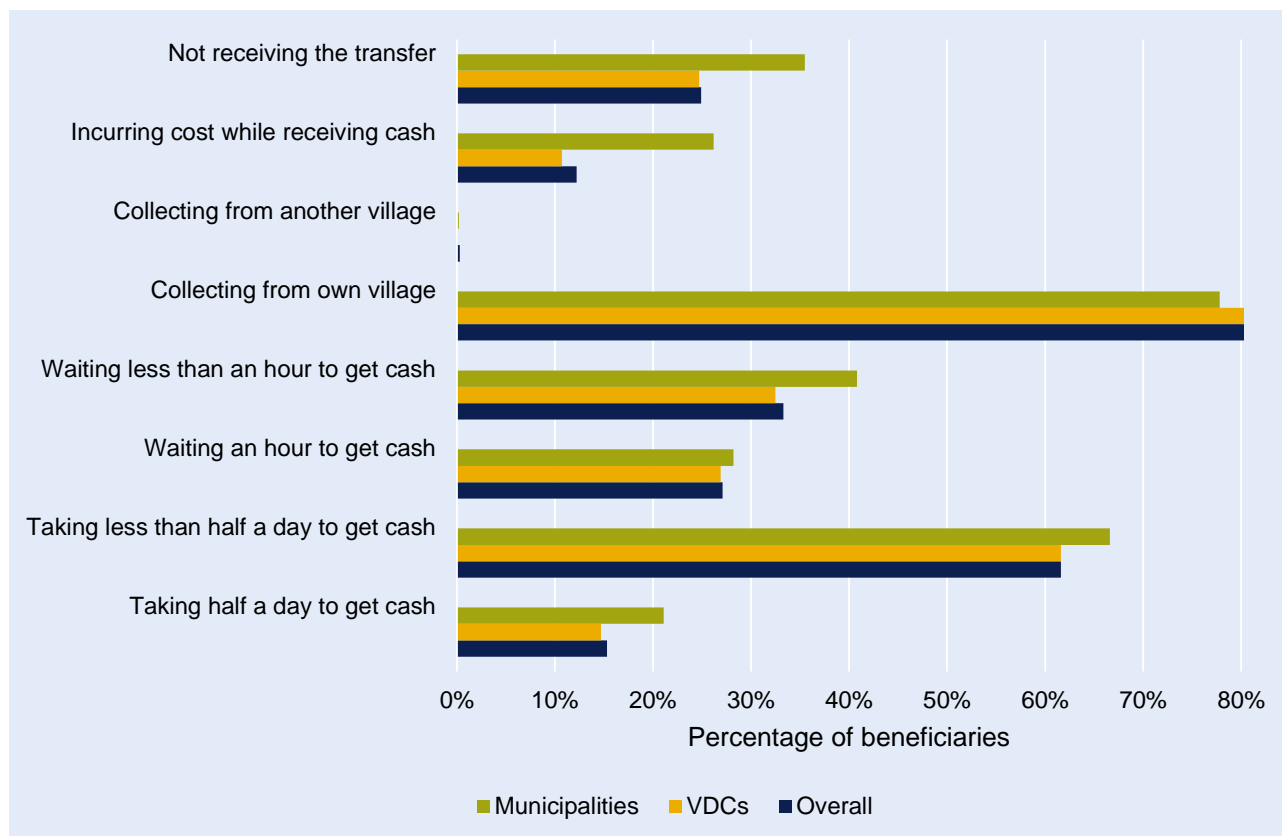

Source: NEPAN, PDM data, 2016

The requests for payment for children from the second registration were ongoing at the time of our fieldwork, with the last having been raised at the end of September, and payment expected in a few weeks. The NEPAN round two PDM data reveal that around 24% of the sampled beneficiaries were from the second round of registrations, and that the timing of when these children received the cash transfer payments varied greatly. Only about 25% of the children identified through the re-registration exercise had received the transfer at the time of the survey, while the coverage rate was 89% for census-identified children.

The chart below on the fund collection experience of beneficiaries in Phase 2 (Figure 17) shows that, as in Phase 1, beneficiaries in municipalities incurred costs during fund collection more often than beneficiaries in VDCs, in addition to spending more time in collecting the transfer. It also highlights that a larger share of sampled beneficiaries in municipalities had yet to receive the cash transfer (35%, compared to 25% in VDCs), which could be related to the relative success of the census exercise in those areas or to the cash disbursement system adopted. In addition, several districts prioritised cash distribution to VDCs over municipalities, which could have further lowered the receipt rates in the latter at the time of the PDM survey.

Figure 17:   Fund collection experience of beneficiaries in Phase 2

Source: NEPAN, PDM data, 2016

Key findings

Potential to improve official registration

In the design documents for Phase 2, UNICEF articulated a clear intention to affect the birth registrations in the country.[87] In the Karnali region of the country, where the universal child grant is already operational, birth registration rates are the highest in the country, being near universal.[88] It appears that a similar change has been facilitated by Phase 2 of UNICEF's cash transfer programme in the target districts. According to a district-level government official:

> *We do not have the habit of registering all our vital events. When people are born, when they move, when they die, no one bothers to come to an office and register those things. However, because of this programme, now everyone wants to register their children. This has made a huge difference to increase the vital registration system of our country.* (District-level KII, GoN)

A SRSP system relies on a robust and updated database of citizens; thus, the increase in birth registrations is one of the key contributions of Phase 2 of the ECTP. At the time of the MoFALD/UNICEF census in 2016, only 48% of children had birth registrations. This increased dramatically to 94% of children having birth registrations in the NEPAN Phase 2 PDM survey later in the same year. This increase is attributable to the ECTP, since during the census exercise

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[87] Rabi, A. *et al.* (2015) 'The Road to Recovery: Cash Transfers as an Emergency Response to Nepal's Earthquake of 2015 and a Catalyst for Consolidating Nepal's Social Protection Floor.' UNICEF Nepal, Kathmandu
[88] As reported in the Nepal Vital Event Registration Baseline Mini Survey 2015.

households were required to get birth registration certificates for their children in order to be able to collect the cash transfer.

Challenge of synchronising payments with regular social protection transfers

The challenges of synchronising UNICEF cash transfer payments with the government's social protection payments, faced in Phase 1, continued in Phase 2 as well. As discussed, the plan of making Phase 2 payments alongside the June social security payments was not possible due to issues in data processing stemming from poor quality census data, the late submission of Phase 1 liquidation reports by DDCs, and competing demands on the time of local government officials. As a result, VDC and ward secretaries had to make an extra round of payments and had to bear the additional administrative and associated financial burdens, again. Given that Phase 2 had a different beneficiary group compared to Phase 1, the possibility of utilising the social assistance payment schedule and system was less extensive in this phase. However, the programme's repeated difficulty in leveraging the gains from the existing social protection delivery system is one of its key shortcomings, and goes against the programme's intended goals of expanding the existing social protection system.

Implications of capacity constraints

The programme placed significant pressure on already stretched resources, as VDCs and municipalities were engaged in various types of earthquake recovery activities at the same time. Implementing this programme on top of other recovery activities meant that VDC/ward secretaries could not, for example, supervise and monitor data collectors during the census exercise. Even when the secretaries themselves were not always personally involved with carrying out the census, because they were responsible for the distribution of cash to selected beneficiaries, they had to face hostility from angry community members who had been missed out by the census. As a VDC secretary noted:

> *Someone else collected data and then we were told to distribute – how are we to answer why someone did or did not get…We did not take their names.* (Village-/ward-level KII, GoN)

UNICEF staff noted that they wanted the DDC and VDC to own the data and to carry out the census themselves, which is why they did not recruit enumerators centrally. The role of the PHD group was to provide technical support. However, the data collectors were often not part of the VDC office, and so VDC secretaries did not have immediate or direct oversight over the data. During disbursement, then, VDC secretaries were not always able to find the children who had been registered through the census.

Although a subsequent child registration process was still going on at the time of our fieldwork, there was some uncertainty, especially at the local level, about whether (and when) the missing children would receive a cash transfer. This uncertainty has intensified anxiety levels among intended beneficiaries not yet on the list of recipients, and it is expected that the reputation of VDC/ward secretaries will be further questioned in these areas if the registered children do not receive funds through the ECTP.

Implications of incomplete coverage

As the census exercise was unable to successfully register approximately 15%–25% of eligible children in the first instance, a sizeable part of the population was disgruntled. The value of the child grant (NPR 4,000–8,000 per household) is a significant sum of money for most Nepali households, so missing out on such an amount created a vocal, frustrated populace in each

district, especially in instances where they did not understand why they had been missed out, or felt that they could not influence the final outcome:

> *Respondent 1: From my house, one son is in the list but the other one is not. Do you think I only added one child and not the other?*
>
> *Respondent 2: If you are missed then you are missed, that's the end. What can we do?* (Village-/ward-level FGD, Phase 2 non-beneficiaries)

This situation was further exacerbated by the decision to distribute funds to the families of those children who were registered in the first round of the second phase of the ECTP before the second round of beneficiary registrations could be completed. A number of parents were already frustrated when their children had not been registered to receive UNICEF support, and even as they sought a resolution, seeing VDCs and municipalities distribute cash to other families in their own neighbourhoods did not alleviate their concerns.[89]

Lack of sufficient remuneration

Although the remuneration value was set by the DoCR, there was general discontent among village-, municipality-, and district-level officials about the valuation of their services by UNICEF. They felt that the remuneration provided by UNICEF for administrative costs was insufficient to cover the costs they bore while implementing the programme. In addition, VDC/ward secretaries and social mobilisers complained that they were not receiving any remuneration for their hard work, as illustrated by an exchange during an FGD with social mobilisers:

> *Social Mobiliser 1: If UNICEF had used their own staff for this work, I wonder how much they would have gotten paid? Now that we are doing it, we are not getting anything really. They should have also thought how much it would cost them to do this work with their own people.*
>
> *Social Mobiliser 2: We have to walk so much, and there are so many expenses. We leave home early in the morning, without even drinking tea, and come home late at night.*

As the quotes show, local officials were not satisfied about the lack of payments, especially given their work load and the high expectations placed on them. Most social mobilisers, for instance, worked extra hours each day and gave up weekends to reach beneficiary households, but they felt they were not rewarded for their efforts. This lack of satisfaction is likely to impact the willingness of VDC-/ward-level staff to engage in such activities again, as well as their level of effort dedicated to implementing the programme, in the future. This also highlights a lack of ownership within local-level government staff, who identified the cash transfer as a 'UNICEF programme' and not a GoN one.

3.2.4   Monitoring

As for Phase 1, UNICEF developed a comprehensive M&E plan for Phase 2 of the ECTP. Finalised in April 2016, the M&E plan details the programme theory of change, outlines the results framework and key indicators measuring programme success against intended outcomes and expected outputs, and specifies the intended sources of evidence for overall programme M&E. The

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[89] The 'Survey note on the ECTP post-distribution household survey', 07 December 2016, notes that two districts failed to submit the data on additional children on time, and those districts were therefore only provided with payments for census children. Although this decision was taken after ongoing dialogue with the concerned DDCs, repeated extension of the deadlines, and several internal management meetings, this is likely to lead to further problems at the community level where families were first missed out in the census exercise, then were promised payments after the second round, only to be excluded once again.

M&E plan was designed to continue to guide programme M&E activities, including real-time process monitoring, as well as the monitoring of outcomes.

The monitoring arrangements in Phase 2, like in Phase 1, included real-time internal monitoring through UNICEF, DoCR, and NEPAN DFPs complemented by PDM data collected through NEPAN's sample-based survey. During Phase 2, UNICEF established and implemented an additional SMS-based survey system, along with a grievance redressal mechanism specifically for the ECTP. The post-intervention evaluation was carried out by an external third-party firm during Phase 2. The present report is the final report on this evaluation.

This section will first discuss internal monitoring, including the grievance mechanism and financial monitoring, followed by a brief discussion of the external monitoring exercise. Progress against Phase 2 expected outcome and output indicators, as defined in the M&E plan, has been consolidated and presented in Table 11 in Annex B.

Real-time, internal monitoring

Real-time monitoring was primarily carried out by UNICEF staff and by NEPAN DFPs, with the expectation that DDC staff, such as the Cash Focal Person and LDO, would engage with programme monitoring activities as well. Nepal scouts were no longer part of the cash transfer programme in Phase 2, and hence no longer played an internal monitoring role during this phase.

Respondents had very different understandings of, and exposure to, monitoring activities at different levels. In most cases, monitoring was understood as meaning field visits during distribution activities. One district-level government official reported:

> *[I] had gone to monitor as well. But this was just for seeing how the distribution was going.* (District-level KII, GoN)

In other districts, respondents highlighted their focus on making sure that the right people got the cash transfer, also at the time of distribution:

> *We did monitoring by our self, we used to go to village and see either right people are getting money or not.* (District-level KII, GoN)

Some respondents' understanding of monitoring was that it included routine field visits and spot-checks on distribution days. District-level government staff reported field visits by UNICEF staff from Kathmandu as well as field offices but were unaware of the activities these staff actually carried out in the field. Unsurprisingly, therefore, in conversations with district-level government officials around external monitoring there was often a lack of detailed knowledge of various monitoring activities by different agents:

> *I don't know whether UNICEF did monitoring in field or not. I think, NEPAN person went to field for monitoring during cash distribution.* (District-level KII, GoN)

There was an understanding among district-level staff, particularly the LDO and Cash Focal Person, that they were expected to carry out monitoring field visits as well. An amount of NPR 40,000 was budgeted for this purpose during Phase 2. However, as already discussed, respondents across almost all our research sites reported being unable to carry out monitoring duties properly due to an insufficiency of resources. As one district-level government official explained:

> *LDO and I are monitoring them through phone and through spot-checks [during distribution], but due to lack of manpower and transportation [resources], LDO and I could not do [much] monitoring in field.* (District-level KII, GoN)

Where district or municipality staff did visit VDCs/wards, these visits were often limited and they reportedly made them using their own funds. The extent of the monitoring activity was visiting on distribution days, ensuring that distribution was happening, and asking beneficiaries how they planned to use the cash. Most district-level staff who had gone to distributions reported visiting no more than a few VDCs (one to four) during the last year.

Our interviews with UNICEF field officials revealed that, as in Phase 1, monitoring conducted by UNICEF staff was largely around operations, and consisted of field visits to see if the distribution was actually happening, when it would be completed, and how beneficiaries planned to use the funds. UNICEF field staff were provided with standard monitoring forms for VDC-level monitoring, though the use of these forms was not specifically mentioned by all of the field staff interviewed. The field offices did not have any dedicated staff to look after the cash transfer during Phase 2 either, and the cash focal person continued to assume this responsibility across UNICEF field offices, in addition to their actual role in the office. Information collected through ongoing monitoring was shared with the central team, who developed plans to address any issues or bottlenecks that emerged.

During Phase 2, district NEPAN DFPs were hired for four months and fulfilled a similar role to that carried out in Phase 1. Their responsibilities primarily consisted of calling VDC/ward secretaries, asking about payment dates, disbursement plans, and progress made, and preparing monthly reports. Within the four-month duration of their appointment ongoing at the time of fieldwork, most DFPs reported plans to visit only a small share of total VDCs. As per the M&E plan, DFPs were expected to provide weekly updates to UNICEF and NEPAN centrally on the progress of VDC/Municipalities during the registration and distribution periods.

At the district level, government staff were usually aware of NEPAN's role. On the other hand, most respondents at the VDC/ward level were unable to name the DFP, as they had not had interactions with them or had only brief encounters over the phone. Although DFPs were instructed by UNICEF to keep their interactions with DDCs to a minimum, and to communicate directly with the VDCs/wards, this was not practically possible given the geographic spread of VDCs and municipality wards. As a result, NEPAN DFPs were unable to visit the field frequently and, as in Phase 1, they focused on gathering as much information from the DDCs as possible. NEPAN representatives reported challenges in engaging with DDC staff, particularly when enquiring about payment progress, delays, and census lists. The limited cooperation by DDC staff can be understood in light of the temporary nature of the DFPs' employment, and the fact that they were not directly representing UNICEF. As a result, DDC staff are likely to not have felt answerable to the DFPs.

As with Phase 1 monitoring, we found that at the village and ward levels respondents were mostly unaware of monitoring activities, and of any actors involved in the process. As discussed, this is most likely related to the scale of programme operations: it was difficult for the field teams from UNICEF, as well as NEPAN, to visit all the VDCs and municipalities included in the programme. In addition, our fieldwork took place before NEPAN's PDM survey was completed, so it is possible that some communities were visited after our fieldwork was completed. Our findings also suggest that DDC and UNICEF staff were more likely to have visited less remote localities within the programme districts, owing to the time required to access far-off VDCs/wards. This is understandable but nonetheless will have had an effect on the overall outcomes of programme monitoring, because the experience of remote villages/wards are likely to differ from those of the sites visited by UNICEF and DDC staff.

Grievance mechanism

The grievance mechanism in Phase 2 built upon the existing grievance redressal mechanism, which relied on communicating directly with VDC/ward secretaries and LDOs, or through local leaders, with a few components associated with that mechanism being formalised in Phase 2.

In the first instance, any complaints around exclusion now had to be registered within seven days of VDCs/wards posting the beneficiary list. Additionally, a toll-free phone number for beneficiaries to make complaints with, was listed on all the programme materials. Although there was a system by which to register complaints using SMS messages, the community members we engaged with rarely reported the SMS mechanism for registering complaints. The problems associated with using SMS messages were acknowledged by UNICEF:

> *I always see a challenge in using SMS because if you have a smartphone, you get the Nepali text, if you don't, then you will get a junk message. If you send it in Roman English, it will be really difficult to understand what it says.* (District-level KII, UNICEF)

Since not everyone had access to the technology, or the literacy skills required, to engage with the SMS messages, beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries relied more on traditional means of registering complaints through VDC secretaries or through local political leaders, who escalated the complaints to DDC level for resolution if needed. The PDM survey data indicate that 52% of the survey beneficiaries did not know about the existence of a complaints mechanism, suggesting that communication around the grievance mechanism could be improved and that the programme did not achieve its own logframe target of 50% of households having knowledge of the ECTP grievance and redress mechanism.

Financial monitoring

Financial monitoring in Phase 2 relied on three main processes: field visits, spot visits and an audit, as in Phase 1. VDCs were responsible for reporting on planned registration, distribution and completion dates to DDCs. After the distribution of the cash transfers VDCs were expected to report back to the DDC on the total funds disbursed and the total number of beneficiaries reached. The DDC was responsible for consolidating this information from all VDCs, including details on under-utilised funds, and reporting to MoFALD and UNICEF centrally.

UNICEF field office staff reported assisting DDCs in this process to ensure financial reporting was accurate and followed the correct procedures. In Phase 2 UNICEF brought in additional staff to support DDCs and VDCs/municipalities with liquidation and reporting. VDCs and municipalities needed to distribute funds within 35 days, and were directed to submit reports on all receipts to DDCs and return any unused money to the DDC. Since the Phase 2 disbursements were ongoing at the time of our research, it is unclear whether this timeline was successfully adhered to in Phase 2. However, given that VDCs/wards were disbursing funds via multiple rounds, and a significant number of children remained to be registered, it is likely that this process will take longer than 35 days to complete in most VDCs and wards.

Post-distribution, external monitoring

As in Phase 1, the PDM process in Phase 2 was informed by the M&E plan developed for the ECTP and included three processes, namely: independent third-party monitoring by NEPAN, an SMS survey, and reporting by DDCs. NEPAN was hired again to conduct the PDM exercise on a sample of beneficiaries. The fieldwork was ongoing at the time of our research and included beneficiaries identified through both rounds of registrations. Owing to time pressures for monitoring reports, UNICEF decided to carry out the monitoring exercise before distributions had been made

to re-registered children, with the result that 74% of the registered beneficiaries (89% of census children and 25% of additional children) had received the Phase 2 cash transfer at the time of the survey exercise. The data collection process concluded at the end of November, and data entry lasted until early December.

NEPAN will also carry out another follow-up survey in 2017 with households excluded from the first round of payments, once all Phase 2 distributions have been completed. This follow-up survey will take place over the phone and will ask sampled respondents a sub-set of questions from the original survey questionnaire. Based on these new data, UNICEF's estimates of Phase 2 coverage are likely to be updated. However, a discussion of those findings is beyond the scope of the present research.

Mobile phones were also used to conduct PDM. UNICEF sent out SMS messages to all beneficiaries who had provided a mobile phone number during the census exercise. Through a series of SMS messages, respondents were asked whether they had received the cash, for how many children, and to provide details on challenges encountered, if any, during the process of receiving the cash transfer. However, only a few of the beneficiaries we interacted with reported receiving any SMS messages related to the programme, and even fewer recalled the content.

In addition, despite attempts being by UNICEF to this end, this interactive platform was not always free for beneficiaries, which is likely to have affected response rates from the sub-sample that received the SMS and understood it. UNICEF officials recognised this reality through their own tests:

> *They [the telecommunications company] said it would be free but when we tried it out, it deducted one rupee per message, and there were seven messages so everyone might not be willing to do that.* (Central-level KII)

The messages were sent in Nepali, written in Roman script, based on the expectation that not everyone would be able to view the traditional Devnagari script on their phones. However, as a result, only literate beneficiaries who could read English letters were able to interact with the SMS platform. This also partially explains the low response rate to the SMS survey, as only 11,345 people (8.5%) of the total 132,605 people who were contacted responded to it.

Use of cash

Though our research was not focused on the use of cash, we found that both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries reported that the cash was largely used to fulfil the basic needs of families and children, including buying food, paying school fees, or purchasing clothes. As in Phase 1, some respondents reported misuse of cash for buying alcohol; however, this appeared to be a caste-based perception that was not backed by many individual cases. For example, one census enumerator explained the use of cash by different communities in the following terms:

> *[Most families] probably used it in farming for labour…some saved in the bank. Dalits ate chicken and beer...Dalits and Janjatis spend more.* (Village-/ward-level KII, non-beneficiary)

Figure 18 illustrates the different reported uses of cash by Phase 2 beneficiaries. Food, clothing, and medication were among the most commonly cited uses of the cash, as in Phase 1. An interesting change from Phase 1 (Figure 12) is the marked increase in beneficiary households saving a portion of the cash transfer: where only 4% of respondents in Phase 1 reported saving the cash, approximately 22% reported doing so in Phase 2. This could reflect the timing of the cash transfer (i.e. a year after the earthquake, when many of the immediate needs had already been met), or it could reflect the targeting mechanism for Phase 2 under which beneficiaries had a mix of

economic statuses and were not only from the most disadvantaged groups in the community, and hence did not need to use all additional cash to meet their immediate needs.

Figure 18: Use of cash by beneficiaries during Phase 2
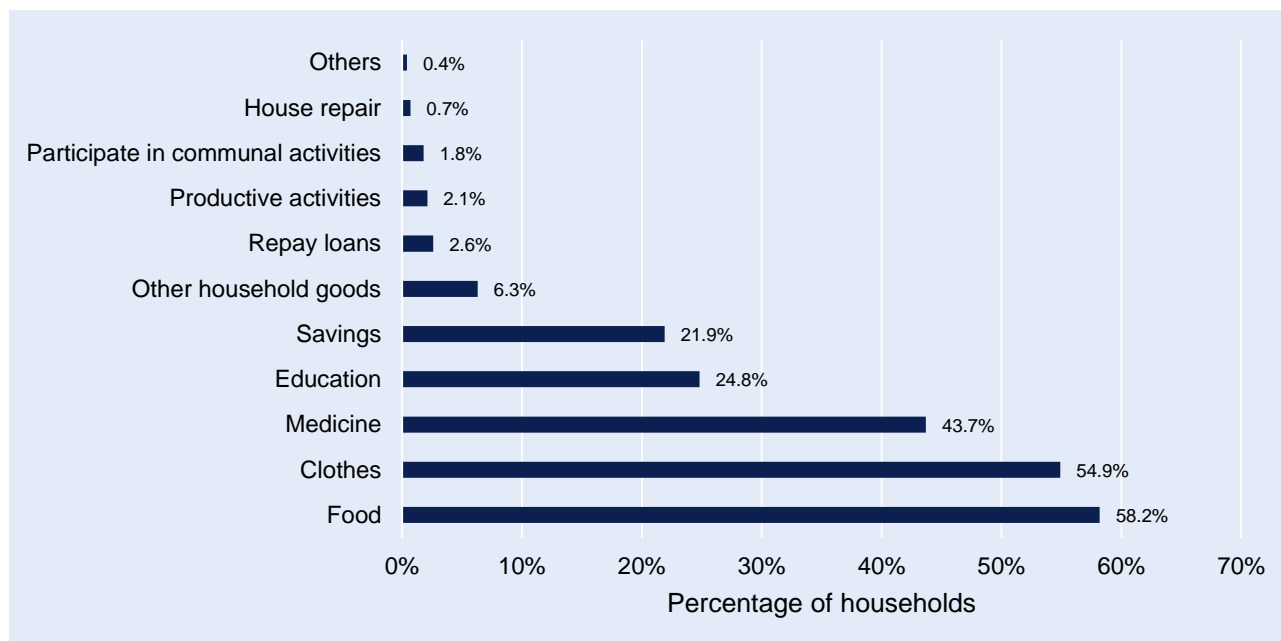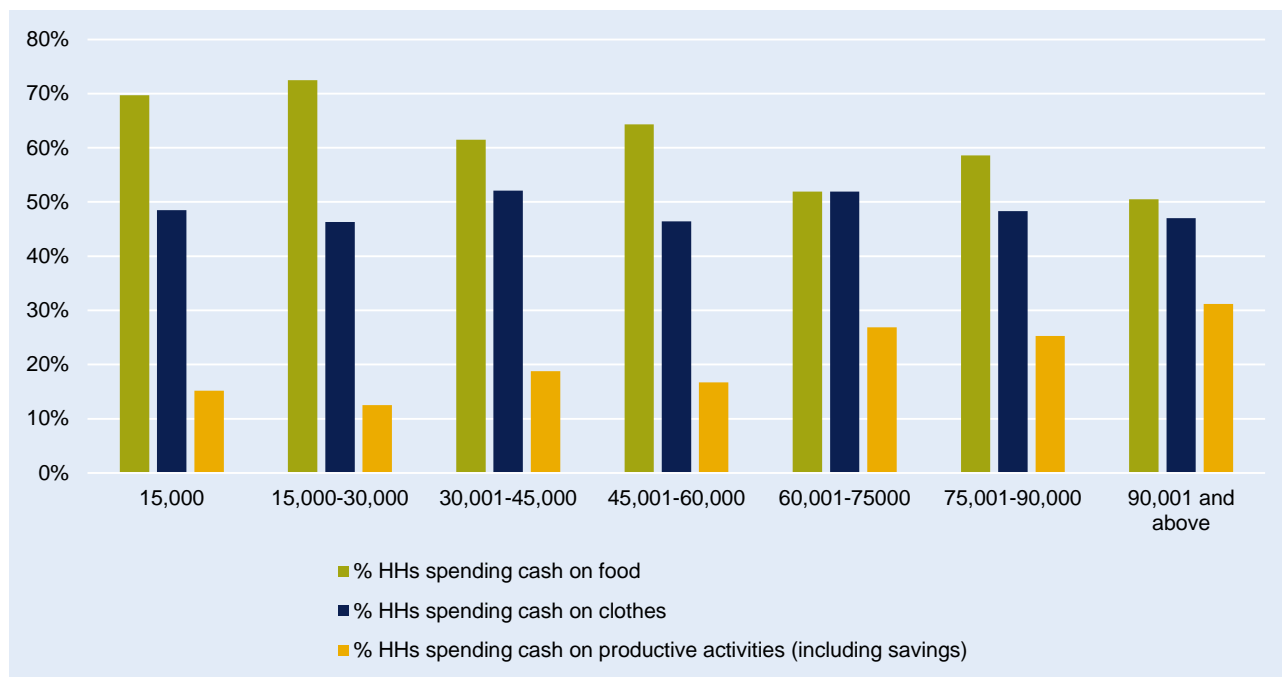

Source: NEPAN, PDM data, 2016.

The second possibility is supported by several respondents who reported that cash usage depended upon the socio-economic condition of the beneficiary, with the result that the poorest groups were most likely to spend it on meeting basic necessities, while less poor groups may have invested the transfer amount:

> *How it was spent depended on socio-economic condition of the beneficiary, [some used it] for insurance or bank accounts were opened. The socio-economically vulnerable and especially affected earthquake victims were Dalits…they bought things like blankets and rice.* (Village-/ward-level KII, GoN)

Cross-tabulating self-reported household income brackets with use of cash in Phase 2 further supports this hypothesis. Figure 19 suggests that although the percentage of beneficiary households spending the ECTP amount on clothes did not show a marked trend across income brackets, the percentage of households spending cash on food steadily reduces, while the percentage of households utilising cash for productive activities increases, as we move from households in the lowest income bracket to those in the highest.

Figure 19:   Use of cash by beneficiary income groups

Source: NEPAN, PDM data, 2016.

3.2.5   Communication

As in Phase 1, Phase 2 communication activities were of two types: those targeted towards programme beneficiaries and those targeted towards actors involved in programme implementation. This section discusses each of these in turn, discussing design features as well as implementation experiences.

Communication with beneficiaries

The ECTP sought to communicate with beneficiaries to inform them about the eligibility criteria for receiving the second phase cash transfer, to support the child census, to announce disbursement dates, and to gather feedback about the process. As in Phase 1, communication with beneficiaries took place through multiple sources, such as: local radio, leaflets, SMS messages, local networks, and word of mouth.

In the first instance, beneficiaries had to be informed about the programme. For this purpose, social mobilisers were expected to distribute information leaflets provided by UNICEF before programme registration. However, we found that this did not happen in most cases. Information about the programme was also relayed through local radio and through SMS messages sent directly to phone numbers collected during the census exercise. SMS messaging was of two types: before disbursements, SMS messages were sent out that contained information on eligibility for the programme, and processes to be followed to access the programme; after the distribution, messages were broadcasted that promoted the use of cash towards improved nutrition for children and lactating mothers.

Although SMS messages were sent to over 130,000 recipients, very few respondents in our sample at the community level reported receiving them. This trend is confirmed in the NEPAN Phase 2 data: only 9.4% of respondents reported receiving the SMS messages, and of these approximately 64% of them found the messages useful. It is also worth noting that SMSs are not a reliable way to communicate in Nepal since a lot of spam is forwarded through text messages. As

a result, people generally mistrust offers that come through text messages, and even a genuine message from an organisation like UNICEF could be ignored as a result.

Although enumerators were instructed not to inform people about the purpose of the census exercise, not all enumerators adhered to this guidance. The census activity itself served as a means of programme communication in areas where the enumerators informed beneficiaries about the programme:

> *Radio messaging happens now for one week after the VDC secretaries have the money. Census acted as communication since most people knew they would get money. NEPAN also did communication. We also did communication through our other programmes, and informed people about the grant.* (District-level KII, UNICEF)

Radio messaging was used to raise awareness about the programme, as well as to announce disbursement dates. Many respondents at the local level, including VDC secretaries and social mobilisers, did not report hearing about the cash transfer over the radio. This suggests that radio coverage was not complete. When probed, some respondents said that they do not have time to listen to the radio. However, when asked about the most effective way of communicating with communities, other respondents suggested radio messaging. This highlights the relevance of a multi-faceted communication strategy, such as the one adopted by UNICEF, which is sensitive to the fact that different people and places have different needs and levels of exposure. For example, respondents in municipalities noted that the radio is useful for reaching the older generation or people in more remote areas, while in urban areas television or print media are more commonly attended to.

UNICEF district-level staff reported utilising their roles in other ongoing post-earthquake programmes in the district to spread information about the child grant. This primarily consisted of informal verbal communication with parents and mothers.

As in Phase 1, a large share of communication with beneficiaries happened through local representatives. DDCs passed on information to VDC secretaries, who in turn used representatives of the WCF, social mobilisers, or hired *katwals* to raise awareness about the programme and the payment dates. In municipalities, representatives from local political bodies, such as the Citizen's Awareness Centre, were used in addition to WCF representatives. A local political representative explained that information spreads very quickly when the government system and local actors are used, so it is not a problem if information is not conveyed beforehand:

> *If one works with the government system then it is not important to communicate beforehand because communication with the help of local actors becomes more effective.* (Village-/ward-level KII)

WCF coordinators and local political representatives were not part of the process in all cases, however. In one VDC, where the WCF members had been excluded from the process, VDC staff reported that this programme was the VDC's responsibility and as such they had decided not to involve other actors. Since the involvement of local actors was not required (though it was encouraged by UNICEF, as per the implementation guidelines), such an approach could be considered valid. However, in this particular VDC, communication was imperfect and involvement of other local actors could have been beneficial.

People also heard about the programme through friends or relatives in other VDCs and approached VDC secretaries to ask about when the programme would start in their villages. The following exchange during an FGD with Phase 2 beneficiaries summarised the different means

through which people heard about the programme, including family members, friends and political representatives, as well as the SMS platform:

> *Respondent 1: When heard about this allowance [from my family member in another VDC], I talked to VDC secretary and was told that because [this VDC] was not remote and had less damage than other VDCs so first money will go to those VDCs and come here later.*

> *Respondent 2: Heard from friends…and family in other VDCs.*

> *Respondent 3: I got three to four text messages, few days before I got the cash asking if I had received [it].*

> *Respondent 4: I got two to three text messages after I received the cash…*

Some beneficiaries also heard about the programme though informal community networks:

> *It was on the radio but I do not listen so I do not know. Some neighbours told me about it so I went, without even knowing my child's name was on the list. When I got there, we were given cash.* (Village-/ward-level FGD, beneficiary)

Even though people who were on the list eventually heard about the disbursement and collected their funds, there was a lack of awareness about who the funds were from, how many times they would get the transfer, and why. People knew that the money was for children and they would get it if their name was on the list, so many people with children were actively trying to register their names on the second list. There was a lot of general anxiety among people that had been missed, since they were unsure about when the funds would come and whether they would get the money at all. Community members were confused about why they were not on the list in the first place and what they would have to do to get the funds once they came. Limited personal engagement at the VDC level from programme implementers, coupled with the limited programme knowledge among VDC secretaries themselves, exacerbated the level of anxiety and confusion.

Effectiveness of programme communication

Although various forms of communication were used, word of mouth seems to have been the most common means of communication through which beneficiaries heard about the programme. This is in line with the findings of Phase 1 as well. Very few respondents knew about the programme through radio, SMS or VDC notice boards. A district-level UNICEF staff member usefully summed up the challenges faced in utilising the SMS-based approach:

> *I always see a challenge in using SMS because if you have a smartphone, you get the Nepali text, if you don't, then you will get a junk message. If you send it in Roman English, it will be really difficult to understand what it says. The market for smartphones is increasing, but everyone doesn't have one. And even if people carry a smartphone, they use it for calls, not for reading messages.* (District-level KII, UNICEF)

The reach of smartphones, the literacy level of the target population, and the willingness to respond to SMS messages are all factors that need to be factored in when developing a mobile phone based outreach strategy. As alluded to by the UNICEF staff member above, a communication strategy relying on voice messages could be more appropriate in such a context.

Community-level respondents offered several recommendations for how programme communications could be improved in the future. They stated that messages or phone calls are a better way of reaching the older generation, who often cannot read or do not know how to operate the SMS function on cell phones. However, since cell phone reception is a concern in remote areas, communication should not take place solely through cell phones in such areas.

Respondents also highlighted the importance of using print media, such as newspapers, as it allows the target audience to engage with information at their own pace, whereas with radio and TV advertisements information is only displayed for a brief moment and many of them are unable to fully understand it, while all respondents were unable to engage with the SMS platform. Respondents also suggested using posters and pictorial messages to communicate with those who are illiterate.

Communication with government

Before starting Phase 2 implementation, UNICEF organised an orientation workshop with LDOs of all 11 programme districts. The participants were briefed on the programme and asked for their feedback on the design and approach. A similar orientation session was organised for VDC and municipality staff across all programme districts later in the year. This meeting was conducted in Nepali and details on design, eligibility criteria, implementation processes, and reporting requirements were shared with the participants. Based on these consultations with district and local government officials, UNICEF made some changes to the programme design. For example, the administration costs available to each VDC increased from NPR 10,000 to NPR 12,000 as a result of these feedback sessions, and VDCs were also provided with some in-kind support to carry out programme duties.

One shortcoming in this engagement strategy was that the district-level orientation sessions were conducted after the census exercise had already been initiated in the DDCs. This was done because there was a desire to move the programme forward as quickly as possible, and since conducting orientation sessions would require UNICEF to first transfer funds to DDCs, thereby slowing down the process. As a result, the census exercise was started in districts without prior consultation between UNICEF and local officials. It is therefore not surprising that the respondents of this research felt that the approach used by UNICEF was top-down. This approach led to some discontent among the district- and local-level government staff in the second phase as well, as they felt that they were being told to do things without being adequately consulted, and with little understanding of their constraints:

> *They did not make plans with us. They just told us they would send the list and we had to check whether it was right or not. If the plans had been made with us, UNICEF, political party representatives…could have made decisions based on discussions with these people; that would have been beneficial. We mostly get directives and information from emails. We do not get to see anyone. They send us money and say finish the work by this time or that time, as if we do not have any other work.* (District-level KII, GoN)

Some officials were of the opinion that the problems with the child census data, which proved to be the most serious impediment to the implementation of the ECTP, could have been addressed in advance, had UNICEF engaged with them in a timely manner, as discussed during an FGD with VDC secretaries:

> *VDC secretary 1: If we knew children would be receiving cash we would have told them that they are receiving cash…*
>
> *VDC secretary 2: They should have involved us right from the beginning from the training and data collection. We don't know how they collected data…some forms got lost, some households got funds and some didn't, but it's us who have to face the situation while distributing money. There were mistakes in data collection but they blame us. If I knew I would have to distribute cash to them, I would monitor the process from the beginning.*

VCC secretary 3: We should have kept copy of form in VDC as well. UNICEF should develop a form in that way in order to provide one copy to district. So that we can verify later about missing names.

In communicating with VDCs and municipalities, DDCs also adopted a top-down approach, which again resulted in a lack of ownership of, and understanding about, the project. Although VDC/municipality officers were invited to a programme orientation session by UNICEF (discussed above), our conversations with them revealed that they had either incomplete or incorrect information about the programme. For example, VDC secretaries reported not knowing that they would be expected to disburse the funds in Phase 2. This could be for a number of reasons, such as poor recall, lack of attention during information sessions, poor attendance, or staff turnover. Similarly, VDC secretaries had no knowledge of the process for registering new beneficiaries, and when the additional payments would come. This posed immense challenges for programme implementation on the ground since VDC secretaries were the key points of engagement with community members, who were often very displeased about delays in payments or being excluded from the programme.

3.2.6   Coordination

The successful implementation of Phase 2 required effective coordination between UNICEF and the DoCR, UNICEF and DDC, DDC and VDC/municipalities, and between VDC/municipalities and beneficiaries. As discussed earlier, there were gaps in communication between different stakeholders, which led to coordination problems between them. In addition, in several instances respondents did not even understand the need to coordinate with other actors, as in Phase 1.

Coordination between UNICEF field offices and DDC staff posed a challenge in Phase 2 since clusters formed for the post-disaster response were no longer active. Instead, DDC staff presided over various thematic committees, to which UNICEF was only invited occasionally. As a result, they were not always aware of other ongoing relief efforts in the district. It is important to be able to coordinate the timeline of programme payments with other activities in the district, since they are likely to influence one another. For example, the social security and child grant payments coincided with the distribution of the housing reconstruction grant by the government. As a result, the national bank faced temporary liquidity issues and was unable to meet the request for funds raised by VDC secretaries. Coordinating implementation activities with other programmes could have helped avoid this outcome and this additional cause of delay.

There is also room for improving communication and coordination within the UNICEF teams involved in implementing the ECTP. UNICEF emergency site chiefs report to the Emergencies team, based in the centre, who have been responsible for all of UNICEF's other post-earthquake efforts, while the cash transfer programme was entirely implemented by the SPEA team. UNICEF field teams were not entirely clear why the programme was being managed by the SPEA team, and whether the two teams were coordinating activities with each other in Kathmandu. Although there were monthly face-to-face meetings between the field office chiefs and the central ECTP staff in Kathmandu during Phase 2, we found that there was a desire among field teams to be more actively engaged in the decision-making and planning processes. In some instances, respondents from field offices reported only being informed of deadlines and tasks to perform once all decisions had taken place, and they reported being completely excluded from planning activities. This lack of communication and coordination within UNICEF led to inefficiencies, as well as feelings of exclusion, both of which have implications for successful programme implementation.

3.3   Conclusions and lessons learned

UNICEF's ability to successfully provide funds to a significant number of vulnerable beneficiaries immediately following devastating earthquakes in a country known for its difficult terrain is commendable. The aim of the summative component of this evaluation has been to provide forensic analysis to weigh both the choices and costs, so as to assess the programme in such a way that the findings will be useful to UNICEF, government partners, and other interested organisations with regards to informing and improving their approach in similar emergency circumstances in Nepal and elsewhere. This section provides a summary conclusion, drawing out some of the key lessons from the programme, and the next chapter provides further recommendations to address these concerns.

Design

Acknowledge limitations of design options

UNICEF's experience with the ECTP highlights the many important but difficult choices that have to be made during the design and implementation of development programmes, particularly in a post-disaster setting. These choices inevitably entail trade-offs. A well designed programme is not one that perfectly mitigates all potential risks, but one that has been developed in light of a realistic understanding of relative costs and benefits of different approaches. The design of UNICEF's ECTP embodied this principle.

For example, UNICEF made the explicit choice to work with the GoN's social protection system following the emergency in order to strengthen and expand the existing system. In relying on the government's social protection beneficiary list, UNICEF chose to vertically scale up the existing system by increasing the transfer amount rather than coverage. This decision was made as it would lead to a relatively quicker roll-out of the programme, despite the fact that this approach would not allow UNICEF to reach all earthquake affected people across the country, or even the most affected people within select districts. In acknowledging the limitations of their approach, and explicitly prioritising speed of delivery over coverage, UNICEF were able to finalise the programme design quickly (within a month after the first earthquake) and were able to start focusing on the more pressing task of programme delivery.

Gain trust by using the government system

ECTP beneficiaries largely appreciated the use of government systems in the distribution of cash. There was generally greater trust in the ability of the government system to deliver on promises, compared to 'NGOs' (which was often used as a blanket term referring to any actors outside of the GoN). Respondents reported examples of 'NGOs' that had promised to build their houses after the earthquake but had not done anything yet.

Delivering cash transfers through the government system not only allowed the programme to benefit from the trust that people had in the system, but also helped to strengthen it by demonstrating that the government was concerned about their wellbeing after the earthquake. Some respondents compared additional support from the government to support one receives from family members in times of need, which furthered the trust in, and feeling of gratitude towards, the government.

The success of UNICEF's ECTP in Nepal suggests that there is potential for gains in project uptake and associated trust stemming from using the government system, which ought to be considered by donors and international agencies during the design stage.

Ensure (local) government ownership of the programme

The UNICEF ECTP experience demonstrates the need to ensure adequate local government ownership of programmes, especially in cases where government agents are involved in implementation. The ECTP was able to garner support from MoFALD and DoCR in both phases, but government staff at the district and village/municipality level often felt excluded from the decision-making process, which affected their motivation as regards owning the project and implementing it as one of their own projects.

The timing of engagement sessions are important if they are to serve their intended purpose. For example, the DDC/VDC orientation session during Phase 2 took place after the census exercise had already started in most districts. While the purpose of the session was to gather feedback from district and local government officials regarding the programme, and to ensure they felt included in the programme design, this was undermined by the fact that programme operations were already underway across districts when the communication exercise took place. As a result, local government officials felt excluded from programme design decisions and often did not identify the programme as being a GoN programme.

Implementation

Develop a robust beneficiary identification strategy

Phase 2 of the ECTP entailed an expansion of the existing child grant to non-Dalit children under five years of age. The census exercise adopted to identify eligible beneficiaries resulted in delays and exclusion, leading to further problems in implementation. The subsequent registration exercise where parents came to register missed out children took place after a long delay, during which families of excluded children were upset and confused about why they had been missed out in the first place, and whether they would ever receive the cash transfer. In some cases, the delay in getting the final list together was so severe that UNICEF were unable to release funds for the newly registered children.

Given the merits and demerits of each approach, a hybrid strategy for beneficiary identification might be the most appropriate, and these will be discussed further in the Recommendations section.

Acknowledge and address capacity constraints

One of the key perceived strengths of the implementation model adopted in the ECTP was its reliance on the current government system, under the premise that it would be the most efficient means of disbursing additional funds. However, the ECTP highlights that delivering cash transfers requires sufficient administrative capacity and resourcing of implementation processes. In an emergency context, the burden on implementing staff is exacerbated further.

There was limited capacity within the UNICEF teams responsible for implementing this programme as well, both at the centre and within field offices. Similarly, although many actors were involved in monitoring activities, NEPAN DFPs who were primarily responsible for carrying out on-going monitoring around implementation activities were only hired for four months in each phase, and were responsible for covering the entire district. Since this monitoring function was under-staffed, NEPAN's ongoing monitoring activities were not as extensive or thorough as needed for a programme of this scale.

Factor in local dynamics

Local dynamics and bureaucratic structures are critical when developing programme communication and implementation strategies, as inability to do so may lead to implementation failures and a lack of motivation among the implementing staff within government. For example, VDCs report to DDCs but municipalities report directly to MoFALD, so any information flow to municipalities should account for this hierarchy so that no institution feels undermined or overlooked. In the ECTP, UNICEF communicated with DDCs at the district level, who were then responsible for communicating with VDCs as well as municipalities, which was not appreciated by some municipality stakeholders.

In addition, staff rotations across geographic locations are fairly common in the government system in Nepal. During our fieldwork, many government officials, especially at the district level were unable to relay information about the previous phase as they had been recently relocated there. Although this is not a problem in itself, since programme communication was weak overall (see below), it meant that officials responsible for Phase 2 were not benefitting from the learnings from Phase 1. This further highlights the need to have in-depth continuous engagement at the district and local levels.

Develop user-friendly systems that support delivery

In the ECTP, UNICEF's system of requesting for funds as well as financial reconciliation led to delays in programme implementation so much so that Phase 2 roll-out started after a long delay in May 2016. Our research found that district level staff struggled to learn the new system on their own and that UNICEF staff did not have sufficient spare capacity to train district finance officers on the system. As a result, a system that was meant to support effective delivery of the cash transfer resulted in inhibiting it.

Monitoring

Strengthen monitoring of outcomes

Both phases of the ECTP had a clear M&E plan based on a theory of change and designed to measure progress against indicators of interest against intended outcomes, outputs and inputs. Both plans outline sources of M&E data including NEPAN DFPs, the post-distribution monitoring survey, and the programme evaluation. Although seemingly thorough, we found that much of the monitoring activities focused on the processes and operations. Though this was important given the scale of the programme and the longer-term objective of strengthening the social protection system in Nepal, this overlooked the need for outcome monitoring. Additionally, as the ECTP was envisaged as being complementary to other support by UNICEF and other agencies, it would have been useful to make those linkages (at least with UNICEF's other emergency support) to assess the contribution of ECTP to the household economies of the beneficiary group.

Develop a coherent M&E implementation plan and facilitate uptake of findings

While UNICEF developed detailed M&E frameworks for both phases of the ECTP early on, the M&E framework left many questions around actual M&E implementation unanswered. For example, while the M&E frameworks talk about involving GoN, UNICEF, and NEPAN in monitoring activities, a clear demarcation of roles and responsibilities across these actors was not included. Coupled with limited communication and coordination across the actors, this resulted in some areas being visited several times while other areas were completely overlooked in monitoring activities.

Very few actors at the district and local levels had knowledge of programme monitoring activities and almost no one reported having seen the findings of the post-distribution monitoring survey. Although UNICEF held a workshop to share the findings with key district- and local-level government staff, many of these stakeholders could not recall their learnings from this exercise, suggesting the need for greater dissemination and more opportunities for engagement at these levels, so that gains from the extensive PDM survey can be utilised at all levels of programme operations.

Communication

Develop (and implement) an effective communication strategy

UNICEF had a well-devised communication strategy from the beginning of programme implementation, which relied on various modes of communication with different audiences. However, we found that while communication between UNICEF and national-level stakeholders was effective, programme communication with district officials, local government staff, and beneficiaries had some key gaps, despite being well-planned. Phase 1 and Phase 2 experiences within the ECTP, therefore, highlight the need to develop and implement an effective communication strategy.

Coordination

Plan for routine engagement with key actors

Given the problems of capacity constraints and knowledge gaps at various levels, as well as the need to update implementation protocols in light of emerging challenges during programme roll-out, it is important to develop formal and regular communication platforms between implementing agents and donor partners to support timely communication and effective coordination in a manner that is not too demanding of government staff time. These engagements need to take place at all levels, and require adequate resources and capacity within the core programme team. This could include scheduling frequent regular (e.g. weekly or monthly) catch-up sessions as a means of developing quick but regular responses to emerging issues in the field. Having a regular space for such conversations will help ensure changes to the programme are routinely communicated in a predictable manner, rather than in the form of *ad hoc* needs-based communication, which can often be extremely demanding during peak times.

In this particular case, frequent communication within UNICEF and DDCs would have helped VDC/ward secretaries to implement a standardised response to the exclusion issues encountered in Phase 2, and to avoid issues that were caused by secretaries developing localised solutions to deal with the issue. Routine communication at the district level would have provided an opportunity for district- and local-level staff to interact with UNICEF staff, and to further their understanding of the programme, their roles and responsibilities, and thus improve information flows and programme implementation. While regular communication on the ground is key, including receiving feedback during the design phase, logistical considerations in the aftermath of disasters make this challenging. The development and implementation of an effective local engagement mechanism as part of disaster preparedness could be critical to the success of post-disaster programmes.

Sustainability

Build an understanding about social assistance across government at all levels

A number of stakeholders at various levels of government (district, municipality, village, and ward) expressed concerns about the misuse of cash transfers and the potential for creating dependency

among beneficiary populations. This led to reduced support for cash-based initiatives at these levels, despite the fact that these notions are not supported by global evidence. There is a need to build an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of cash-based programmes within government so that social protection schemes such as the ECTP have the full government support that is needed for their successful implementation.

Carefully implement the transition to using financial institutions

Municipalities make payments directly into beneficiary bank accounts for the regular social assistance cash transfers, and DDCs might consider a similar approach. Many respondents at the centre suggested this as the way forward for additional cash transfers as well. However, there was some evidence that hasty moves towards electronic payments would not be viable at this stage.

Our findings reveal that this shift needs to be approached with caution, as many beneficiaries do not have bank accounts, often do not know how to acquire one, and do not have effective access to banks. Future programmes will have to be mindful of this reality in order to facilitate provisions within banks to help such individuals with limited financial access. Administrative requirements (such as IDs and proof of residence) lead to immense challenges in this process, often excluding the most vulnerable and marginalised groups. Programme personnel should liaise with banks at the central and local levels to streamline the disbursement process and to ease the burden on beneficiaries.

In addition, the capacity of banks to process the extra services needs to be realistically evaluated. During Phase 2, when social assistance payments coincided with government reconstruction grants, banks struggled with liquidity: there were long lines outside banks, with several hours or even days of waiting time, suggesting that this move did not improve the experience of beneficiaries in grant collection.

Finally, banks are often inaccessible for a substantial proportion of the rural population in Nepal. A shift to using banks should be based on a comprehensive understanding of the penetration of financial services. It is highly likely that the most remote areas, where VDC secretaries struggled to make payments on time, will also be the areas where beneficiaries will struggle to collect their transfer payments through banks, which are often located at the district centre. In the current localised disbursement model, the VDC or ward secretary has to incur transportation costs from the district to the village/ward in order to make payments, but the shift to banks could mean that these costs could be magnified and transferred to the beneficiaries, limiting the full impact of the disbursed amount of funds.

There is a need for further scoping and assessment work to be done to inform the development of a strategy for streamlining cash transfer payment services. An alternative model could explore mobile money and branchless banking or remittance collection points, which are situated across the country, and which have far greater geographical reach than banks. Further scoping work should draw on the current activities of other donor partners in this area, for example DFID's *Sakchyam* programme, which aims to improve financial access (see Section 4.5.3).

Investigate the potential of a comprehensive social registry for SRSP

In an emergency context there are some good arguments for horizontal expansion of existing social assistance systems. To be efficient and effective, this requires either a comprehensive database of the whole population, or a facility whereby shock-affected people can quickly register with the system. The experiences from Phase 2 suggest that carrying out a census in order to identify beneficiaries is very challenging, time-consuming, and error-prone. These challenges are exacerbated if time pressures are increased due to an emergency context. Currently, there is a

need to update the vital registration database in Nepal, and the World Bank and the GoN are working closely to support this initiative in the country and are in the process of constructing a social registry of the whole population. If such a social registry is established, updated and incorporates the facility for regular information updates, it could enable the existing social assistance system to expand (and contract) horizontally with relative ease in order to target affected groups in emergencies. UNICEF should keep abreast of the progress of the World Bank project and maintain dialogue between donor partners and GoN around this to continue to investigate its potential for SRSP (further elaborated in Section 4).

3.4 Recommendations

In addition to the general discussion on the key conclusions and lessons learned from this evaluation, we present here some specific recommendations for UNICEF to consider in their emergency programming for the future. We have organised these recommendations in lieu of issues related to the broader system and environment within which UNICEF operates as well as specific to the programme.[90]

3.4.1 System-related recommendations

1. Assess systemic capacity for programme delivery and provide necessary support to ensure successful delivery

As discussed in the previous chapter, the implementation of the ECTP required significant support from government officials, especially at the local level, and their time and resource limitations affected the roll out of the programme. Even when government staff were available to implement the programme, they were often unclear about their roles and responsibilities. To address these challenges, programme personnel have to actively and continuously engage with government staff both before implementation starts and throughout implementation. Although this is not always possible, especially in emergency contexts, developing a model that plans for this explicitly would help improve delivery.

There is, therefore, a need for better assessment of the level of additional burden that can be sustained by the existing staff, especially at the village/ward levels. In addition, resourcing requirements, including remunerations for implementing staff, need to be realistically evaluated and provided so that staff are rewarded adequately for their extra effort, motivating them to deliver effectively.

2. Prepare a contingency plan for turnover in personnel

Programmes relying on government staff for their delivery need to incorporate a robust contingency plan as part of their approach to address high turnover within the bureaucracy. As the implementation of the ECTP shows, staff turnover in programme districts was high even in the immediate aftermath of the earthquakes, so UNICEF should ensure that the staff they train and/or engage are fully aware of clear handover plans for their successors, should they leave for any reason. Similarly, UNICEF should also make provisions for timely orientation sessions for new staff members who assume any responsibility in delivering a UNICEF programme. Since this issue is

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[90] We note that UNICEF either implemented or tried to implement some components of the activities that we have recommended in this section. For instance, UNICEF used a communication strategy and an evaluation framework as part of the programme. However, our recommendations in this section go further to provide more detailed suggestions for how similar programmes could be improved in the future.

likely to affect most UNICEF programmes, and not just the ECTP, UNICEF should develop a contingency strategy to address turnover as part of their wider country programme.

3.4.2 Programme-related recommendations

1. Improve the census exercise

The child census carried out at the start of phase 2 was a significant exercise, and its roll out and implementation had serious implications for the programme. As such, our key recommendation is to provide an itemised list of suggestions to improve this exercise, should a similar activity need to be carried out, either following a disaster or more broadly as a strategy to support improved government registry systems (such as the expansion of the child grant).

A. Assess and use existing data

UNICEF should use existing datasets such as the national living standards survey or the national census to estimate potential beneficiaries in each enumeration area. For a census involving children, such as the one employed for the ECTP, health, nutrition, or vaccination data could also be used to provide a base estimate of children at the local level. Such an exercise can provide an initial estimate, which can also form part of the quality assurance mechanism at the end of the exercise (see Step 7).

B. Communicate the upcoming programme at the community level

This exercise should be extensive, and should include details about the planned census exercise (see below), its purpose, and expected duration. More details about an effective communication strategy are discussed further as the next recommendation.

C. Conduct a household based census at the community level

This census exercise should be carried out using experienced data collectors who have received extensive training on the purpose of the exercise, the questionnaire, and ethics around data collection. We propose a training of two weeks, with an in-field pilot exercise to ensure consistency and quality. Given the effort and time intensive nature of the exercise, we propose hiring enumerators especially for the purpose of census data collection instead of asking someone with another full time role to perform this activity.

We propose a number of other related activities to strengthen the quality of the data collected through this exercise:

   i. UNICEF should hire an in-field monitoring unit to verify a random sample (at least 3-5%) of data being collected by the census enumerators while the process is ongoing. This will serve to course correct in real time and identify any malpractice by specific data collectors. Having census enumerators outside the official VDC office will ensure that lines of accountability are upheld and that monitors have the administrative power to influence (and improve) enumerator performance.

   ii. UNICEF should link enumerator rewards with accuracy of data, as determined by the in-field monitoring, rather than to a daily numeric target, which incentivises speed of data collection over quality.

   iii. UNICEF should ensure that the officials expected to make use of the data and implement the programme understand the data collection process from inception to

completion. Their input could be vital to successfully link the data collection and programme implementation.

D. Set up a desk-based registration system for beneficiary-led enrolment

UNICEF should also set up a registration station at an easily accessible public space, such as the VDC office or local school, immediately after the household census has been conducted and the data has been consolidated. This station will allow parents of children that were missed out during the census exercise to register their children. The dates associated with this exercise should be clearly communicated at the community level. UNICEF should collect the same information as was collected during the census, preferably using the same data collectors, so that there are no systemic inconsistencies across the two activities.

There is a general concern that a beneficiary-led enrolment into a programme could lead to inconsistencies, as potential beneficiaries might try to enrol children even if they do not meet the criteria, for instance because they are over age. To address such concerns, UNICEF could incorporate a robust verification process to check that only eligible beneficiaries are registered. Birth registration cards and vaccination cards along with residence documents could be used to verify the age and location of the beneficiaries.

E. Compile a complete, integrated list of children

UNICEF should prepare an integrated list for each community from both the census and desk-based registration exercises, highlighting any entries which might be susceptible to duplication. This list should be forwarded to VDC and ward secretaries for a final validation exercise, with a particular focus on duplicate entries.

F. Carry out a community-led mapping exercise

If UNICEF have time and resources, they could also consider carrying out a community-led mapping exercise to plot and verify the number of children in each household in a community. Such an exercise is especially useful in a rural setting, and can be helpful to identify children from poor and marginalised households who might remain 'hidden' from official data collection activities.

G. Validate the data before programme roll out

UNICEF should then compare the final total number of children identified in each community with the initial estimates, and follow-up with field teams, VDC secretaries, and DDC staff in case of major discrepancies. The final beneficiary list per enumeration area that is prepared through this process can then be used for a successful roll out of the programme.

2. Delay roll out to address discrepancies and maximise impact

The evaluation team is aware that such an extensive data collection exercise could be time intensive, and could delay a rapid roll out of the programme. Such a methodology would thus not be appropriate during the relief phase, as UNICEF are aware. However, especially for the rehabilitation and reconstruction phase, a slight delay in programme roll-out to ensure the collection of more accurate and extensive data as well as information sessions for district- and village-level government officials could result in a speedier and more effective implementation phase once the programme starts.

During the implementation of the second phase of the ECTP, UNICEF began payments to the beneficiaries registered through the household census, even as UNICEF and government staff

were exploring options to register children who had been missed during the initial census. This led to a lot of anxiety and dissatisfaction among parents whose children had been missed. Even though disbursements began quickly in phase 2, then, the quick rollout in the context of incomplete data undermined the quality of the implementation, and the time period for the roll out stretched substantially, with phase 2 disbursements still ongoing in some districts even in Feb 2017. As such, a slight delay in beginning the roll out might actually be beneficial even for the overall period of programme implementation.

3. Address capacity concerns at the programme level

Although UNICEF might not always be able to influence staffing decisions at the government level, a useful starting point could be to dedicate more human resource capacity to support programme operations. For example, more core ECTP staff in Kathmandu and dedicated staff at field offices would allow for more routine engagements between UNICEF and government staff at local and district levels, without diverting staff attention away from other ongoing activities given that field staff were 'shared' between the ECTP and other programmes during both phases of the programme.

Similarly, dedicated full-time cash grant focal persons at UNICEF field offices would have helped address communication and coordination problems with DDCs and VDCs/wards experienced in both phases of programme operations, while at the same time ensuring there would be one key person in each district responsible for overlooking all monitoring and implementation activities.

4. Implement an effective communication strategy

UNICEF had a communication strategy to implement the ECTP, but we recommend the following approach to strengthen this further.

A. Pursue a multi-pronged approach

The means and mode of communication should be extensive, making use of print, radio, TV, and social media because a multi-pronged approach is necessary to reach a wide range of stakeholders and audiences.

B. Utilise existing local strengths

Most respondents at the community level heard about the ECTP through word of mouth. Established local organisations such as Mother's Association and Female Community Health Workers should be mobilised to disseminate information to identify and register children, especially given their knowledge of and regular interaction with children at the community level.

C. Communicate all key information, and in a timely manner

Communication also needs to relay all the important pieces of information down to the local level. During our consultations, we found that VDC/ward secretaries often only had partial information about the ECTP, as a result of which different secretaries had different interpretations of the programme and its activities, which led to further problems during implementation.

There is an ethical responsibility on the programme implementation team to not withhold information. Communicating openly and honestly with beneficiaries is essential not only from a research ethics perspective, however, but because it could also minimise instances of respondents opting-out of the survey or giving inaccurate information because they do not understand the purpose of the exercise.

Communication activities need to take place with sufficient time for target audiences to engage with the messages, and for repeat messaging to take place. In the ECTP Phase 2, VDC secretaries were expected to nominate individuals for the census exercise.

D. Repeat key messages

Knowledge gaps around the programme existed among local and district level government staff despite UNICEF sharing written implementation guidelines with them. Similarly, understanding about the programme at the community level was limited despite the programme disseminating information through multiple channels. There is thus a need to continuously repeat key messages so that people are adequately informed and reminded about the programme.

E. Have provisions to track progress against communication plans

UNICEF could accomplish this by including indicators related to communication coverage, recall, and feedback within the monitoring plan. This should happen regularly so that there is room for course correction during implementation. For example, while UNICEF's programme implementation guidelines shared with district officials stated that local organisations and networks (such as WCFs) should be included in programme communications, this suggestion was not adopted in practice. Real-time monitoring of communication activities could have helped correct this.

5. Develop an embedded evaluation plan

It is encouraging to note that plans for an impact evaluation were included in the preliminary M&E approach for Phase 1. However, given that this programme was innovative and was expected to contribute towards the body of evidence around the feasibility of using social protection systems to respond to shocks, incorporating evaluation activities into yearly programme activities from the inception of the programme would have helped gather a more robust evidence around key evaluation questions. As discussed in Section 2, one of the key limitations of our research was the recall problem respondents faced in answering questions about Phase 1. Had the impact evaluation plans been embedded in the programme implementation schedule from the beginning, this recall bias would have been minimised and findings from the first round of data collection would have been able to influence an improvement in Phase 2 roll-out. UNICEF should implement a concurrent independent evaluation alongside the implementation of its key projects to facilitate rigorous assessments of impact in a systematic way.

6. Develop a coherent M&E implementation plan and facilitate uptake of findings

A coherent M&E implementation plan, following from the M&E framework, could have been useful in this regard. The M&E implementation plan would be expected to detail a clear sampling approach for each type of monitoring activity, including details on population coverage, frequency and type of engagement, key indicators to measure, and reporting arrangements. The sampling details could then be used to estimate the amount of human and financial resources needed to effectively carry out the various monitoring activities. This plan could also develop a consolidated workplan for all monitoring and evaluation activities so that opportunities to utilise complementarities and cross-validate evidence could be leveraged. This approach would help address the issues of overlap, exclusion, and capacity that were prevalent in ECTP monitoring during both phases.

The M&E implementation plan should make explicit plans for the dissemination of findings so that actors involved in programme implementation across various districts have an opportunity to improve their performance in light of emerging evidence. This can include thematic presentations

for actors based on their role within programme delivery, as well as working sessions to discuss key findings and their implications.

4   SRSP in Nepal

Having evaluated the ECTP in Section 3, we discuss below the agenda and requirements for building an SRSP system in Nepal.

4.1   The role of social protection in humanitarian disasters

Broadly defined, social protection may be considered as the set of public actions that address both the absolute deprivation and vulnerabilities of the poorest, and the need of the currently non-poor for security in the face of shocks and lifecycle events. The 'public' character of this response may be governmental, non-governmental, or both. Social protection encompasses a wide range of policy instruments that have varying objectives and that are supported by different financing mechanisms. Such policies may be labelled as 'social assistance', 'social care', 'social insurance', or 'labour market policies'. Broadly speaking, policies vary depending on whether they pursue: a social assistance function, supporting vulnerable groups, generally financed through taxation or external aid in many low-income countries; or, social insurance, addressing risks over people's lifetimes, generally funded through employer or employee contributions and based on principles such as risk-pooling. These distinctions may be fuzzy: general taxation can be used to finance social insurance deficits. However, they provide a general framework for categorising different types of policy instruments.[91]

In the guide to *Principles and Good Practice of Good Humanitarian Donorship*, agreed in 2003 by a group of international donors, NGOs, and multilateral agencies, humanitarian aid is defined as resources that are used to fund 'actions designed to save lives, alleviate suffering, and maintain and protect human dignity during and in the aftermath of emergencies'. Humanitarian assistance is separate from other forms of foreign and development assistance because it is provided in adherence with key humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence.[92] Humanitarian assistance is spent on activities and services undertaken for the benefit of affected people, to facilitate their return to normal lives and livelihoods, and is coordinated in thematic clusters in line with sectoral objectives.[93]

Humanitarian aid is given in response to disasters. DRM is often understood as having five focal areas: prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. An SRSP system primarily relates to preparedness, response, and recovery from a disaster. While certain aspects of humanitarian assistance (such as rebuilding roads after a natural disaster) are unrelated to social protection, there remain potential overlaps between a number of different DRM activities and social protection mechanisms.[94]

The traditional thinking has been that humanitarian aid responds to immediate, temporary life-threatening needs, while non-emergency support is provided on a more long-term basis to respond to chronic poverty and vulnerability. In practice, however, this is often not the case. Humanitarian interventions may continue for years, while long-term development activities often contribute to saving lives, especially by building the resilience of populations to shocks, as a form of DRM. One area in which the boundaries are increasingly blurred is in the transfer of resources to households in difficulty: the 'social transfers' of long-term social protection, and the 'material relief' and

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[91] OPM (2015) 'Shock-Responsive Social Protection Systems: A research programme for DFID, Working paper 1: Conceptualising Shock-Responsive Social Protection'. OPM, Oxford, UK.
[92] Development Initiatives and GHA (2014) 'Global Humanitarian Assistance: Report 2014'. Development Initiatives, Bristol.
[93] OPM (2015) 'Shock-Responsive Social Protection Systems: A research programme for DFID, Working paper 1: Conceptualising Shock-Responsive Social Protection'. OPM, Oxford, UK.
[94] Ibid., p.9.

'emergency food aid' of humanitarian response. As humanitarian actors move towards providing more assistance in cash rather than in kind, which grant households flexibility in how they spend it, these humanitarian interventions look more similar to the cash transfers provided by long-term social assistance.[95]

The use of cash transfers or 'multipurpose cash grants' as a tool in the humanitarian aid response to shocks is becoming increasingly prevalent. Evidence for the effectiveness of cash transfers in emergencies is well documented. Where markets are functioning, cash transfers allow people choice and flexibility to meet their needs, including as needs change from immediate relief from a crisis to recovery. As the nature of crises shift from temporary to more complex, protracted and chronic emergencies, cash transfers may become more appropriate since they allow people to invest in rebuilding their livelihoods and repay debt, potentially boosting their resilience to future shocks. In addition, there is growing evidence that they have multiplier effects on the local economy, stimulating economic recovery. From an operational perspective, cash transfers offer an opportunity to overcome some of the challenges of the traditional approach to humanitarian assistance. They have the potential to improve the speed and efficiency of response relative to in-kind aid, and may promote a move away from compartmentalised cluster-based response approaches.[96]

Cash transfers can be effective where populations have diverse needs that can be met by the market, and where a standard allowance can be calculated easily. A key determinant of their effectiveness is that the transfer must be of sufficient size to meet critical expenditure gaps and prevent beneficiaries resorting to harmful coping strategies. Operationally, whilst the same contextual factors drive the cost-efficiency and effectiveness of multipurpose cash transfers as other cash modalities, they appear to have some distinct characteristics that have the potential to generate cost savings, including the size of the transfer relative to the transaction costs; coordinated assessment and registration processes; a common delivery infrastructure; and a reduction in the number of implementing agencies.[97]

This said, cash programming in emergencies is not a silver bullet and will not be feasible or appropriate everywhere. It is dependent on the availability of commodities in the market, and on the economic, as well as physical, conditions of market access. Moreover, not all needs following a shock can be effectively addressed through a single consolidated transfer. Certain needs may be more appropriately addressed through single-sector cash and in-kind transfers (such as shelter construction, livelihoods recovery, and actions to safeguard the nutrition and public health of critically vulnerable groups) or through a combination of different forms of humanitarian transfers (such as cash transfers combined with in-kind transfers). These transfers may also generate new operational challenges with possible consequences, including changes to the coordination and financing of humanitarian aid.[98]

4.2 UNICEF's vision for SRSP

In the aftermath of the 2015 Nepal earthquake, UNICEF proposed that one of the fastest ways to respond at scale to the needs of the affected population was to utilise the existing social protection system. Across two phases of an ECTP intervention, they would first implement vertical expansion of that system and then, in a second phase, implement horizontal scale-up to new beneficiaries in order to meet the recovery needs of this new target population. The interventions were thus

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[95] Ibid., p. 11.
[96] Ibid., p. 12.
[97] Ibid., p. 12.
[98] Ibid., p. 12.

intended to support basic consumption during immediate relief and recovery phases, and to act as a catalyst to strengthen and expand the existing child grant programme.

According to our interviews with UNICEF staff, the ECTP was not envisaged as a replacement for comprehensive humanitarian action. Rather, it was anticipated that a plethora of interventions by other actors, including the GoN, development partners (including other UNICEF programmes), and humanitarian NGOs, would be implemented alongside the ECTP, which together would comprise a comprehensive response to the disaster-affected population.[99] Furthermore, because the beneficiary households were not excluded from other cash support provided by the government, it was reasoned that the ECTP would act as a top-up grant to support those vulnerable populations in earthquake-affected areas.[100] Implicit in UNICEF's approach in the ECTP was the assumption that beneficiaries of the GoN's social protection payments are more vulnerable than other households, and thus require additional support.[101]

The notion that the ECTP would not provide a comprehensive response to the crisis is crucial as it acknowledges that SRSP is unlikely to fully alleviate the need for a broader humanitarian response. In the aftermath of a crisis, such as the earthquakes, securing immediate needs like health care, shelter, and water are expected to be key priorities that social assistance, whether in cash or in kind, is not able to fulfil.

The ECTP provided proof of concept that the existing GoN social protection system can be used as a tool to respond to emergencies. There was broad agreement on this amongst the international community. However, opinion within GoN was more divided. The NFSP explicitly acknowledges that the ECTP did provide proof of concept, and this opinion was shared by some respondents. For others, however, this was less evident. A senior official noted that though demand for social protection was high, administrative capacity to deliver it was low. Moreover, while scaling up universally in the immediate aftermath of a shock or disaster was considered to be valid, more stringent targeting of limited resources and benefits to the most affected population was thought to be necessary in the recovery period. A few officials expressed scepticism about the supposed level of support from the GoN for using social protection to respond to shocks, noting that there were already mechanisms in place for responding to shocks, such as the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) emergency fund, and that coordinating between ministries (such as MoFALD and MoHA) would be a big challenge. At the local level, there was stronger opposition among government officials as to the viability of using unconditional cash transfers as a means of recovery following shocks (see Section 3.2.2).This opposition largely pertained to the use of cash transfers during the recovery phase, as against, for example, cash-for-work, and also to the low value of the transfer for recovery purposes; at the relief phase, use of unconditional cash transfers was generally accepted.

At the central level we found general support for the SRSP agenda, which is reflected by the fact that it has been incorporated formally into the NFSP. For this agenda to be fully realised, a variety of considerations need to be made across a number of dimensions, including the policy and legislative framework for social protection in Nepal, the institutional architecture for social

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[99] UNICEF's response to the earthquakes included distributing in-kind relief kits, providing safe drinking water in informal camps, constructing tent hospitals, providing child-friendly spaces in informal camps, and implementing a widespread measles vaccination programme, particularly for children who had been displaced into informal camps. Table 2 provides a summary list of the types of programmes and interventions other development partners implemented as part of the relief and recovery effort in response to the earthquakes. This list is not comprehensive.

[100] These included: housing grant of NPR 300,000; a concessional loan of NPR 2,500,000 in Kathmandu Valley and 1,500,000 outside of the Valley; NPR 15,000 for managing temporary accommodation; NPR 40,000 per dead person, towards cremation costs; a death grant of NPR 100,000. See reliefweb.int/report/nepal/post-earthquake-relief-rehabilitation-and-reconstruction-measures-undertaken-government.

[101] A further consideration was that in the immediate aftermath of the earthquakes there were no data on the affected population so it was reasoned that the ECTP was a rapid way to reach a significant portion of the population.

protection, the supporting systems and operational processes, government awareness and buy-in, and the need for coordination at all levels of the system. We discuss these aspects in more detail below.

4.3   Policy and legislative framework

The legal basis for social protection in Nepal is already well established. The Constitution (2015) guarantees the right to social security for various vulnerable population groups (Article 43), as well as the working population (Articles 34 and 51), women (Article 38), senior citizens (Article 41), and Dalits (Article 40).[102] Social protection provision also features in the Civil Service Act (Third Amendment 2014) and the Labour Act (amendment due). The draft Social Security Act (due) is set to further develop the legal framework for social protection mechanisms in line with ILO Convention 102 on the minimum standards of social security.

The draft NFSP sets the parameters for developing and coordinating social protection policies. It outlines the basic scope and direction for the sector, and proposes the creation of the institutional bodies that will be mandated to steer cross-ministerial decision-making and coordinate development partners, civil society, and the private sector.

The draft NFSP directly references the need to develop the social protection system in order to become more shock-responsive, by which it means the creation of programmes that have the facility to scale-up in a timely manner so as to support affected people during a crisis, and scale back afterwards.

A legislative basis is thus in place, and is currently being further enhanced, and the rudiments of a policy framework are being put together. However, a number of challenges and issues for development are identified. The NFSP recognises that, despite recent increases in spending on social assistance, the impact of social assistance programmes on peoples' lives is constrained by a variety of factors. These include:

* the low value of the benefit amount;
* the limited coverage of poor households due to narrow and sometimes overlapping targeting;
* the lack of complementary programmes, specifically for the income poor;
* inefficient implementation;
* under-developed administrative and payment systems; and
* The rigidity of implementation systems, which prevents or constrains the ability of programmes to expand (and then contract) in response to large-scale shocks.

Furthermore, the NFSP argues that the historical lack of coordinated oversight and strategic direction for social protection has resulted in a wide assortment of uncoordinated programmes that suffer from fragmentation, duplication, and lack of coherence.

The NFSP is being developed precisely to address some of these challenges (more of which are discussed below), but, from a legislative perspective, the key gap in relation to the development of a SRSP system pertains to the regulation of the use of funds in an emergency context. This issue was raised by a number of both government and donor partner respondents.

The primary funding mechanism for financing emergency response initiatives is the Prime Minister's Disaster Relief Fund (PMDRF).The fund is channelled through MoHA and its district-

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[102] Indigenous groups, incapacitated and helpless citizens, helpless single women, citizens with disabilities, children, citizens who cannot take care of themselves, and citizens belonging to tribes that are on the verge of extinction.

level offices, to reach the victims of natural disasters. However, both government and donor partner respondents expressed concerns about the limitations of utilising this fund for the purposes of financing the social protection system in its response to shocks. First, the PMDRF is not budgeted and so it may be insufficient for the type of large-scale expansion and provision of cash transfers made to social assistance beneficiaries in times of emergency. Second, because the PMDRF is off-budget, further increasing the size of this fund would not be ideal from a transparency perspective. Third, the PMDRF flows through CDOs, which makes it very difficult for many donors to utilise it.

An example given by one donor partner was the cited preference for the LGCDP fund, which, in the aftermath of the earthquakes, donors had agreed to finance to the tune of $5 million. LGCDP used those resources to buy tarpaulins and other emergency shelter equipment. However, the LGCDP fund might not be a sustainable instrument for contingency social protection financing going forward because LGCDP is a finite programme and there is a potential institutional conflict as MoHA is in charge of emergency response but LGCDP sits in MoFALD. In any case, donors had felt comfortable using the LGCDP fund because LGCDP is well established, and was perceived to embody relatively low fiduciary risk, in contrast to the PMDRF.

There are differing opinions between certain donor partners and government officials as to whether there is a need for a separate contingency financing mechanism. One development partner in particular suggested the ideal would be a discrete formal financing mechanism for shock response, to which donors could contribute, for which a formal coordination mechanism and guidelines for its use would be required. From the perspective of some government officials, however, all that is required is a set of guidelines or SOPs specifying what finances flowing through the PMDRF would be directed to social assistance in given circumstances.

Regardless of whether a new financing mechanism is required or not, a legislative framework and set of regulations (and SOPs) to govern the direction and use of funds for social assistance in times of emergency are required. UNICEF have recently produced their own set of SOPs for implementing an ECTP in the future, but these (appropriately) do not cover the financing mechanism or reform of the legislative and regulatory framework.[103] What the legislative and regulatory framework (and any subordinate SOPs) must cover is the institution mandated to administer the fund in the event of shocks, the definition of the shocks covered, the conditions and parameters for ring-fencing of funds for social protection, and the monitoring of the flow of funds used.

4.4   Institutional context

The above remarks on the current policy and legislative context for SRSP in Nepal indicate some of the institutional or political economy challenges that will need to be addressed in order to develop the social protection system so that it becomes more responsive to shocks. Currently, as the NFSP itself and many of our respondents acknowledge, a large number of social protection programmes exist, and are situated across a number of ministries and other agencies.

Alongside the five extant social assistance programmes, MoFALD also implements two public works programmes. The Ministry of Health (MoH) provides supplementary nutrition programmes for pregnant women and young children, a maternal incentive scheme to encourage institutional delivery, medical treatment funds for the poor and elderly, and grants for children affected by AIDS. The MoE provides a range of scholarships and school feeding programmes to improve school attendance and performance for girls, Dalit children and other disadvantaged groups. The MoAD,

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[103] UNICEF Nepal (2016) 'Expanding Nepal's social security system in response to disasters: Standard Operating Procedures, Version 1'.

the Ministry of Commerce and Supplies, and the Nepal Food Corporation support subsidised food distribution. Productivity-enhancing schemes for the working-age poor include low interest loans for agriculture and labour migration run by the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE), and skills training for disadvantaged groups run by MoE and MoLE. The MoF provides public- and some private sector workers with pensions, provident funds, and injury insurance. The Social Security Fund will have responsibility for private sector social insurance upon the enactment of the Social Security Act 2072. Social care services are run by the Ministry of Women, Children, and Social Welfare (MoWCSW), and a number of special provisions (quotas and subsidies) are available for people with disabilities. MoHA is responsible for coordinating emergency cash and in-kind assistance for communities affected by floods, landslides, and other disasters. During disasters, a host of non-governmental actors become involved to address many of the same issues, including social protection programming and delivery.

The NFSP sets out to address this complex and fragmented landscape by establishing institutional bodies with the mandate to steer and direct social protection policy and programming in Nepal. For this purpose, it proposes the creation of a Social Protection Policy Coordination (Steering) Committee (SPPCC), a Social Protection Working Committee (SPWC) and a Social Protection Secretariat. The function of these bodies will be to oversee the implementation and monitoring of the NFSP, to coordinate policy development and programme implementation across implementing agencies (at the federal, provincial and local government level), to establish and regulate minimum standards/regulations for social protection programmes, to review and recommend financing needs and mechanisms, and to convene prior to the budget formulation to approve/endorse any new programmes or major reforms in line with the NFSP. The SPPCC will be chaired by the NPC and will include membership of 10 ministries as well as the NPC Social Development Division.[104]

With regard to developing the social protection system so that it becomes responsive to shocks, a key challenge identified by all respondents related to coordination. UNICEF's vision for SRSP acknowledges the fact that coordination of actors is essential, whether expanding vertically or horizontally, or piggybacking new programmes onto existing systems (for instance, utilising existing payments systems to distribute funds from new programmes, or using current beneficiary lists), or even using a combination of programming options (for instance, combining vertical and horizontal expansion or combining standalone humanitarian response in one phase with a more planned recovery that is in sync with the social protection system in another).

In the case of the vertical expansion of existing programmes, UNICEF acknowledges that the extant social assistance programmes cannot be considered as a comprehensive response to the affected population. The lists of beneficiaries of the existing social assistance schemes are highly likely not to cover the whole affected population. Therefore, there is a need to coordinate any vertically scaled-up social assistance response not only with other government initiatives, such as those managed and implemented by MoHA, but also with relevant NGO activities across humanitarian clusters, to ensure that the whole of the affected population is covered by necessary emergency responses. In the case of horizontal expansion (and on top of the coordination required for vertical expansion, depending on the nature and extent of horizontal expansion), there is a need not only for the coordination of the agencies responsible for registering new beneficiaries, but also of the underlying systems, such that registration systems speak to one another. For example, social assistance programme MIS will need to be integrated with vital registration services (for more details on this issue, see Section 4.5.4) so that potential beneficiaries can be accurately

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[104] The ministries involved are: MoF, MoFALD, MoE, MoH, MoWCSW, MoLE, MoAD, MoLD, MoHA, and Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Cooperatives (MoPAC).

identified and verified, and inclusion and exclusion errors kept to a minimum.[105] In the case of piggybacking, there is a need to coordinate programmes piggybacking on the government systems both with those systems and with each other. A robust coordination mechanism is thus essential for any form of SRSP.

In the aftermath of the 2015 earthquakes, the CCG nominally played this coordination role, but it experienced a number of challenges. Initially, these centred on market monitoring, and the difficulty of coordinating NGOs and other organisations so that they used the same set of monitoring tools. According to our respondents, the CCG could not achieve this because it could not secure buy-in from all the NGOs. The CCG only had hubs in three districts as well, where OCHA hubs were located, but without a more constant presence it struggled to push things forward. Monitoring tools were only agreed in August, after which there was insufficient time to get useful information back to promote buy-in. Then, when the first set of information produced by those tools came back, it was not able to provide trend analysis. By the time the second set of information came back, a lot of NGOs had dropped out so there was insufficient information for the CCG to analyse. Leadership of the CCG was also a challenge, with OCHA keen to play the lead role but not internally clear about the scale and scope of that role. This issue was then compounded by changes within the OCHA team (the cash coordinator and then the technical expert left), meaning that some operational hubs lacked adequate experience. These difficulties meant that the CCG did not have a strong influence over the work of other thematic clusters. Finally, according to some development partners, the general lack of understanding and acceptance of cash transfers (particularly unconditional cash transfers) among policy-makers, and the resultant lack of clarity in their positions regarding these, compounded matters further.[106]

Despite these challenges, the CCG was able to mobilise people to coordinate cash transfer efforts by humanitarian actors, and also to coordinate the work of the CCG with other humanitarian clusters. The CCG did manage to get agreement on the multipurpose grant value within a month of the first earthquake, albeit that value was established in a fairly arbitrary way.[107] It also played a role in ensuring acceptance and implementation of the GoN cash-for-work guidelines.

In moving towards building a SRSP system it will be important to consider a coordination mechanism that has a clearly delineated role and an appropriate body mandated to carry out this function. This will include the setting of an appropriate transfer value for any cash payments, based on adequate assessment of need. The NFSP proposes the SPWC play this role, but contains no detail on the relation between this body and the CCG, which is an increasingly formalised coordination mechanism within the global humanitarian cluster coordination architecture. The NFSP should also articulate what role the development partners can play in the coordination mechanism, for example through the Nepal national development partners SPTT.

There is thus a need to elaborate a detailed proposal regarding the nature of the mechanism for coordination between these bodies, their staffing and resourcing, roles and responsibilities, and mandated authorities. The coordination mechanism needs to be designed such that it speaks to

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[105] An inclusion error is where a beneficiary is wrongly included in the programme, for instance because they do not qualify according to the programme eligibility criteria. An exclusion error is the opposite of an inclusion error, whereby a person or household that is eligible for the programme is wrongfully excluded, for example because they were missed during the programme registration or enrolment processes.

[106] Ferrie, G. and Gautam, B.R. (2015) 'Cash Preparedness in Nepal Lesson from the 2014 Earthquake.' Kathmandu: Nepal.

[107] The price of a minimum monthly basket of goods for households was developed by the CCG after the earthquakes. Although there was a lot of price variation across districts, this was calculated at about NPR 10,000 per household. In the event, this amount was deemed too high, so it was agreed that the multi-purpose grant would be set at 75% of that. The NPR 7,500 cash amount was agreed by all 14 organisations signed up to the CCG. See CaLP, UNHCR, OCHA, Oxfam, Save the Children and WFP (2015) 'Operational Guidance and Toolkit for Multipurpose Cash Grants.' www.cashlearning.org/downloads/operational-guidance-and-toolkit-for-multipurpose-cash-grants---web.pdf.

the coordination systems for humanitarian action. It is appropriate to consider greater engagement of this coordination mechanism in humanitarian situation analysis functions, such as market and needs assessments. Although these assessments are necessarily led by technical expertise within the multi-cluster initial rapid assessments (MIRAs), they need to produce consistent information about the functioning of markets and the prevalence of the needs that underpin the decision to utilise cash-based responses. The coordinating mechanism needs to be underwritten by an agreed set of protocols in this regard, which clearly determine what government and non-government actors can expect from each other in terms of cash-based responses in cases of emergency shocks.

Furthermore, the coordinating mechanism should be linked to national monitoring mechanisms, such as early warning systems and price monitoring (for example, regional consumer price index sentinel sites). This would allow it to kick into gear if agreed trigger levels are reached, potentially before some crises set in, as well as to more effectively set and agree the value of any cash-based response (for instance by enabling consistent pricing of minimum consumption baskets).

4.5   Operating systems

In order for a social protection system to be able to respond effectively and efficiently to covariate shocks, strong functioning operational systems are required. These systems must include functional processes for the registration, selection, and enrolment of beneficiaries, and for payments, case management, communications, and monitoring. Additionally, the social protection system must be linked with emergency surveillance systems so as to not only respond when needed but to be able to anticipate shocks and prepare accordingly. Among other things, this would entail appropriate resourcing for implementation in emergency contexts, when the burden on staff and other programme resources and infrastructure will be high.

4.5.1   Registration, selection, and enrolment

The ECTP implemented two types of expansion as a response to the 2015 earthquakes: vertical expansion in Phase 1 and horizontal expansion in Phase 2.

In the first phase of vertical expansion one immediate limitation related to the routine registration cycle of the five government social assistance programmes themselves. Up until 2015, although the vital event registrations were conducted by the VDCs throughout the year, enrolment for social assistance was only done annually (around December), linked to the consolidation of the vital events registration records at the DDC office. At this time, the list of people eligible for social assistance under relevant schemes was also agreed at the DDC and forwarded to the DoCR for budgeting purposes, and budgets were approved accordingly by the DoCR/MoFALD. Because this process happened annually, the section of the eligible population who were included in the vital events registration records of the VDC/municipality, but whose records were yet to be synced with the vital registration records at the DDC level, were not enrolled in the programmes and were unable to benefit from the ECTP. In short, the constraints of the existing system for registration, selection, and enrolment further contributed to the problem of the ECTP not covering the whole of the affected population.

This situation changed from mid-2016 onwards and the vital events registration is now conducted continuously throughout the year in VDCs/municipalities, with a DDC-level consolidation of data occurring three times a year. This consolidated vital event information is then shared with the DoCR three times in a year, along with a list of people who qualify for any of the social protection entitlements. The allocation of budget to the DDCs continues to be released once a year, but a

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provision now exists for the DDCs to request a budget top-up in advance of the social assistance payments to cover new beneficiaries.

The World Bank is currently engaged in plans to develop this system further, aiming to digitise vital registrations at the VDC (or VDC cluster) level over the next five years. DDCs in the country are now equipped with online software that is linked with the central database, and the aim is to push this further down the local government administration structure. However, at this time, most VDCs still maintain the records manually. In some VDCs, and almost all municipality offices, a computerised database for vital events registration is maintained but the software used is offline and therefore must be synced with the DDC database once every four months. Furthermore, additional challenges remain in the form of a lack of regular or comprehensive access to electricity, computers, or internet at the VDC and even ward levels, so use of these tools might not be as immediately effective as expected. Recent and ongoing advances in the registration and enrolment process notwithstanding, the challenges to the expansion/use of the system for future crisis still exist.

The need to alleviate the constraints imposed by vertical expansion forms part of UNICEF's rationale for strengthening and expanding the child grant. Were a universal child grant to be operative at a national scale, it would considerably boost coverage of any shock-affected population in the case of vertical expansion, as a much higher proportion of the general population would be covered. In May 2016, the GoN announced the expansion of the child grant nationally, which UNICEF have been lobbying for and working towards in the last few years.

In line with this announcement, UNICEF is supporting the government to operationalise the expansion plans. According to rough estimates by UNICEF, NPR 1.2 billion (about $11 million) will be needed for a national-level expansion, which is much higher than the amount allocated by the government for this purpose.[108] One option, suggested by some respondents for this research, is to propose an incremental expansion of the child grant by first prioritising risk-prone or vulnerable areas and then scaling up in new areas as more resources become available. If this were to happen, it could help lay strong foundations for a SRSP system in Nepal. Given the political nature of this incremental expansion, it is important that the measure of vulnerability is acceptable and not contested. According to a UNICEF staff member, the use of the Human Poverty Index (HPI) could be a pragmatic choice in this regard.

At the time of writing, MoFALD has accepted proposals from UNICEF regarding a universal approach with incremental geographic expansion based on HPI ranking. The initial stage of an expansion plan has been approved by MoFALD and the MoF. The first three districts have been selected (Accham, Bajang and Rautahat) and will be introduced this financial year, pending approval of additional financing from MoF. The challenge going forward is thus going to be sustaining government commitment to continuing to expand each year.[109]

The second phase of the programme relied on horizontal expansion, which represents a much more challenging form of shock response because a new beneficiary population has to be registered and enrolled. UNICEF's experience with Phase 2 of the ECTP highlighted several challenges with this process. In the absence of relevant data that could help with the identification and registration of new beneficiaries, UNICEF embarked on a census exercise. This was an extensive exercise that posed a number of significant challenges during Phase 2 (see

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[108] The amount currently allocated to fund the national scale-up of the universal child grant is NPR 20 million. However, many government respondents argued that this amount was insufficient to cover more than a couple of low-population districts for one year.
[109] See unicef.org.np/media-centre/reports-and-publications/2016/11/07/policy-brief-an-expansion-strategy-for-nepal-s-child-grant and http://unicef.org.np/blogs/2016/12/14/costing-the-child-grant-expansion-in-nepal.

Section 3.2.3). Furthermore, to plug the gaps in the new registration data, a re-registration process had to be initiated, which had additional cost implications for the programme.

Ideally, in order to implement horizontal expansion quickly and efficiently, one would need a database comprising a comprehensive registry of the whole population. This could then be used to select beneficiaries for a range of interventions, including social assistance cash transfer programmes in the event of shocks. These kind of 'single' or 'social' registries are currently popular in thinking about social protection systems.[110] In Nepal, the World Bank is currently investing in the creation of a social registry for just these purposes (see Section 4.5.4).The investment is hoped to contribute by enhancing civil registration of vital events (birth, death, migration, marriage and divorce) and linking civil registration with social assistance programmes. The programme aims to increase civil registration of vital events through door to door household visits and through implementing ward-level registration camps. These activities will be supplemented by a communication and outreach campaign. As discussed above, data entry is supposed to take place below the district level, where designated VDCs will be provided with IT equipment in order to enter data. VDC staff that are not part of designated VDCs will need to visit these designated places to enter relevant data into the MIS. The aim is to kick-start a social registry of the whole population, and then link this to the national vital registrations system so that the registry is automatically updated with births, deaths, and other vital events registrations (such as marital status, disability, and internal migration).[111] Such a comprehensive and semi-automated registry would be of tremendous benefit to the social protection system, especially as regards building that system so that it can respond to shocks.

However, there are a number of significant challenges with regard to implementing social registries:

- **Data quality:** as the experience of UNICEF shows, conducting the initial data collection for such an extensive census exercise is a significant challenge, and requires considerable resources and expertise in order to ensure both data quality and data management. As the data may be used to distribute a range of programmes and interventions, including potentially life-saving emergency interventions, the risks of inclusion and exclusion errors are accentuated by poor data quality. This becomes even more important in the case of responses to shocks that target the affected population or programmes aimed at especially vulnerable populations.
- **Data validity over time:** household and individual characteristics change over time – often rapidly – so, depending on the type of data, there is a need to update the data regularly. Again, this becomes more important the more the data are used to target more and different types of programmes. Linking the registry to birth and death registration enables automation of population growth and age data updates, and if the registry can be linked to other registration systems (such as national IDs) these dimensions can also be automatically updated. However, many of the other vital characteristics that programmes such as social cash transfers rely on are not adequately related to these vital registrations. For instance, some programme targeting requires information concerning the relationship between individuals to be specified (for more on this see the bullet below), such as orphan status, death or disability status. Ensuring these types of data are updated presents a broader challenge. Post-crisis contexts exacerbate these challenges, as crises themselves are likely to provoke a number of these types of changes

[110] Chirchir, R. and Barca, V. (2016) 'Integrating data and information management for social protection: Social registries, integrated beneficiary registries and virtual registries'. December 2016. London: United Kingdom. [Draft]
[111] The data collection process will start in August 2018. However, the World Bank has already collected information for 11 of the most earthquake-affected districts. Twenty-five out of 75 districts use MIS containing specific information about the actual beneficiaries and details on payments. The aim is to roll out MIS in all 75 districts in the country. The project also aims to roll out electronic payments in 25 districts. See World Bank (2016) 'Strengthening Systems for Social Protection and Civil Registration Project PAD'. Washington DC: United States of America.

(e.g. deaths, disability and displacements) that need to be factored in when designing and implementing horizontally scaled up programmes.

- **Household-level data:** if the registry is linked to other vital registration systems, data on individuals may be updated more or less automatically. But maintaining up-to-date household data is much more complicated. During the initial data collection, a fairly accurate snapshot of the population household structure can be taken (the level of detail of which, of course, depends on data quality). However, this image will quickly begin to blur and become outdated as households change their number and composition (households dissolve and new households come into being continuously over time). Maintaining accurate records of the relationships between individuals (that is, household-level information) can only be achieved through regular updates of the information contained in the registry. This is particularly pertinent for information such as household poverty status (see also Section 4.7) or other such data that programmes, including social assistance programmes, may want to utilise to select beneficiaries.[112] Even the simplest household-level data, such as household size or quality of dwelling, are subject to this challenge. As such, maintaining household-level data requires regular manual updating (either through frequent census data collection exercises or on-demand updates by households themselves; see below), which requires strong administrative capacity and adequate resourcing.

- **Functioning vital events registration system:** the most crucial assumption of the single registry is that the national vital events registrations system to which it is linked is functioning. Birth and death registrations must be operative nationally and should be covered by the single registry in order for the data to retain a minimal level of integrity. However, the Nepal vital registration system is currently under-developed, and while the World Bank is engaged in a programme to support its development (see Section 4.5.4), it has yet to become fully functional and thus adequate for providing a strong basis for SRSP.

- **Links to other government programmes:** linking a social registry (and, through it, a social assistance programme's MIS) to other government interventions (civil service pension, social insurance, public works schemes, subsistence allowance for conflict martyrs, food aid, and scholarships) should enable GoN to appropriately coordinate distribution of interventions across the population and help control for 'double-dipping'. At the district level, DDCs and especially municipalities already do this, by requiring migrant residents to bring a letter of approval from their home locality to confirm that they are not double-dipping. This imposes a cost (in time and potentially in resources) on the beneficiaries, but ensures that the system is not abused. This emphasises the value added by linking to vital registration systems, which would automate this process and thereby reduce the cost placed on beneficiaries and local administrators.

- **Communication:** apart from the data collection and its management, there are challenges with regard to communicating with people about such registries. Census registration or registration on a large scale requires different information to be sent to different people. Local government administrators and any additional auxiliary temporary staff involved in the implementation of the registration need to understand and be able to clearly explain the aims and objectives of the exercise. They should also be trained in the required processes. The population needs to be informed what is happening, when and why, and to be given all the key bits of information required for them to effectively participate (such as any supporting documentation needs). Communicating even simple information of this sort to the general population requires multiple channels, and carefully developed messaging and branding are important to prevent confusion

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[112] The Ministry of Co-operatives and Poverty Alleviation is identifying poor households in the country by using proxy means testing. The data collection has been completed for 25 out of 75 districts. A total of 1.3 million households were enumerated. The Ministry is in the final stage of distributing poverty cards to households in these 25 districts, though there is some controversy about the quality of these data (both in terms of sell-by-date and general quality) and the political viability and administrative capacity in regard to implementing poverty targeting.

among potential beneficiaries (see Section 4.5.2 below). The experience of ECTP in Phase 1 and Phase 2 provides ample evidence of the potential challenges of effective communication for the delivery of the programme (see Sections 3.1.5 and 3.2.5).

The questions regarding the need for, or value of, a comprehensive register of households do not answer the question of how such a registry will be constructed or maintained, either initially or on an ongoing basis. The World Bank project begins with a census-style data collection exercise, but at the other end of the spectrum is an on-demand system, whereby households register themselves at a local registration site (the World Bank also incorporates some movement towards this end of the spectrum, with its ward-level registration camps, but these are temporary structures and a fully on-demand system would rely on permanent offices). There are trade-offs between these two extremes.

Census-style data collection is very costly and replete with challenges associated with data quality, as described above. On-demand systems are much more sustainable in this regard. On the other hand, on-demand systems are potentially more liable to exclude applicants (compared to a well done census), either due to communication challenges or accessibility of the registration offices. The risk of exclusion will be exacerbated for especially vulnerable groups, such as the old or infirm (who may have mobility constraints), the very poor (who may not be able to afford the travel or other application costs) or the socially marginalised (who may be more likely to miss out on communications). One challenge with communications around an on-demand system for a social registry is to ensure the population understands its purpose, and thus to ensure all households are incentivised to register and update their information on a continuous basis, even if they are not entitled to existing routine programmes. The more programmes that utilise the single registry and the more evident it is that it is utilised to deliver shock-contingent programming the bigger will be the incentive for the general population to register.

From a sustainability perspective, an ideal scenario would be a comprehensive social registry of the population, linked to vital registries and updated annually via an on-demand approach to ensure data are valid and household-level information is sustained. The more programmes that are linked to and utilise the single registry the more cost-effective the initial and recurrent expenditure investments will prove.

4.5.2   Communication

Communication is a vital part of delivering any government service, and social protection and social assistance programmes are no exception. Because delivery of these services involves direct transfer of cash from government to households, it is crucial that key programme parameters (such as eligibility criteria, value of payments, mode of payment delivery, and case management and grievance mechanisms) are well understood by the beneficiary group. In addition, the wider population needs to understand at least some of these parameters. The implementing staff need to understand all of these parameters and all the functional processes associated with the programme. In addition, beyond programme staff, there is a group of central-level stakeholders (politicians, other government departments and ministries, development partners, NGOs, and other civil society groups) that need to understand the aims and objectives of the programme, eligibility criteria, coverage rates, impact, and other such information. Communicating these varying types of information to these diverse audiences requires a bespoke communications strategy which specifies in detail the key messages, branding, and channels of communication to be used. In times of shock, if the social protection system is to be scaled up, this expansion then needs to be communicated to all these groups in addition to the normal set of information. Failure in this regard could create confusion amongst some or all of these different stakeholder groups, which could

cause inefficiencies in the system. The programme's ability to achieve its intended objectives could be compromised, which could provoke negative reactions towards the programme.

The experience of using a range of communication media in the ECTP present the following lessons for working on a SRSP system:

Use a mix of communication channels across a variety of media that are accessible to defined target audiences

For communicating with beneficiaries and the general population, electronic media such as radio and SMS was utilised by UNICEF and the government as part of a multi-platform communications strategy for disseminating information about the ECTP. However, we found that the outreach of electronic media varied across localities. Even where coverage existed, SMS did not prove to be effective because of the way in which people utilise mobile technology (see Sections 3.1.5 and 3.2.5). The electronic medium of communication has proven to be effective during emergencies in some low-income countries where coverage is good and the culture around the use of such technology is amenable—for example, after the earthquake in Haiti, mobile phones were effectively used for both communicating messages and as a payment mechanism—but it is clear from the Nepal experience that certain conditions (such as access to technology, a working/reliable network, electricity supply) need to be met for this to be the case. Involvement of the private sector and other stakeholders may help in exploring the potential of, and expansion of, the coverage of mobile networks that might be leveraged.

The main channels through which beneficiaries reported receiving information about the ECTP was via VDC and ward secretaries. This implies that these staff are a key node in the communications network, and therefore require adequate training and communication guidance to be directed to them, alongside resourcing, to transmit key messages to beneficiaries and the wider general population (see below). Although initial training and communications guidance was given by UNICEF to programme staff, the results of the summative evaluation presented in Section 3 of this report show that, despite these efforts, the results were less than optimum. This emphasises the difficulty of this type of communication and indicates that more resources are required to deliver it.

Word of mouth was the most popular medium of communication: beneficiaries relied on information from VDC staff, neighbours, WCFs, and *katwals*. Moving forward on a SRSP system will thus require investments to strengthen these traditional communication channels, alongside investments in electronic communications infrastructure over the longer term. A communications strategy that properly invests in implementing staff, and then exploits other formal and informal communication channels at the community level, would be appropriate. This could include poster campaigns in public spaces, such as education and health facilities or scout buildings, such that authority figures can help to pass on accurate information to the wider population, especially to those in remote areas or who are members of illiterate or semi-literate populations.

Messaging needs to be simple, targeted to a specific audience, and tailored according to the medium of communication

Communication can be challenging in normal times, and it is even more so in an emergency context, due to the disruption of normal life, infrastructure, and services in the areas affected by the emergency. At the same time, the need for communication is heightened at such times, as people likely require a range of information about a number of additional interventions and emergency programmes, in order to be able to access the relevant support. In such a context, it is very likely that beneficiaries and the general population could become confused. It is therefore crucial that simple, clear and accurate information is packaged appropriately for the relevant medium of communication. Such information should include:

- information about the programme aims and objectives;
- information about the programme design: the criteria for selection, the value of the benefit, how long the emergency programme will last;
- information about registration and enrolment processes: how, when and where registration and enrolment will be done; who will do the registration and enrolment; the documentation required to register and enrol; and
- information on programme operations: how, where and when disbursements will take place; the requirements (documentation etc.) for collecting payments; and how to contact the programme if needed (e.g. for case management or complaints and grievances).[113]

Local implementing staff need adequate training and continuous communication and support to ensure they fully understand the programme and its processes

The experience of ECTP indicates that while VDC/municipality ward secretaries are a key node in the implementation of an expansion of the existing social assistance system, they were often not fully clear on the programme parameters and procedures (despite training and guidance being received from UNICEF; see above). As a result, there was inconsistency in the implementation of ECTP across VDCs and DDCs, particularly in Phase 2, in which new beneficiaries had to be added to the programme. Similarly, finance and accounts staff in the DDCs, who play an important role in the timely disbursement of grants and the reconciliation of accounts, had limited knowledge of the programme, which hindered their ability to support the programme. Adequate training and communication for officials involved in implementation of the scale-up must be given due attention in developing the SOPs for a SRSP system. This may involve multiple rounds of training as well as follow-up support. There is a need for a two-way channel of communication that informs staff but that also makes it possible to receive feedback on processes in order to further improve the system.

4.5.3   Payments

The system for social assistance payments includes transfer of funds from the DoCR to the DDCs and then from the DDCs to VDC and municipality accounts. The disbursement of transfers to beneficiaries is carried out by hand by VDC staff. In municipalities, depending on the location, cash is either disbursed directly to beneficiaries' bank accounts or by hand by the ward secretaries. This system was utilised by the ECTP in both phases, and that experience highlighted a number of challenges with the existing system.

The banking infrastructure and network is at a nascent stage in Nepal, with most bank branches located in district centres. Carrying cash in backpacks is a common practice among VDC, and some municipality ward, secretaries. This mode of payment delivery clearly involves a level of risk (such as theft or misappropriation of funds[114]), especially given that some VDCs are remote and require a trek of one to two days from the district centre. This risk was exacerbated for the ECTP, as it would be for any future emergency scale-up, as the volume of cash to be carried is bigger when an emergency top-up grant is included. Emergency top-ups also add to the workload and expenses of VDC secretaries, who are expected to manage volumes that are much higher than the amount they handle in normal times. After the earthquakes, the GoN has renewed efforts to strengthen the banking sector and plans to gradually make social assistance payments through

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[113] It should be acknowledged, as Section 3 shows, that UNICEF communications materials did contain this information (with the exception of information regarding dates of activities on print materials, as precise dates often differed between locations or were not known at the time of printing. However, accurate date information was included in updates using electronic platforms such as radio and SMS).
[114] It should be acknowledged that no evidence of this actually occurring has been found.

banks. However, as the respondents to this evaluation pointed out, realising this ambition remains a distant reality, given the current low coverage of banking services beyond DDCs.

Liquidity constraints were rarely mentioned as a problem in either phase of the ECTP. However, this is a potential risk, and one that will grow with the volume of cash that is disbursed. Sequencing of payments (e.g. by VDCs) is one way to handle such a risk; however, this would potentially compromise the speed of delivery for those areas where disbursement is delayed, and could also cause anxiety among potential beneficiaries who hear about payments elsewhere but have yet to benefit.

This risk may be addressed in a more proactive way during the needs assessment and design phases of any emergency response. Once the value of the transfer and coverage rates are established, the total volume of cash disbursements can be calculated. The SOP can then specify how the financial sector (i.e. banks) is to be coordinated so as to minimise liquidity constraints to achieve the aims of the programme.

A humanitarian context requires the payment system to be agile and to deliver assistance at speed, especially in the first eight weeks of relief provision. Many social assistance systems are designed to make payments on a monthly, bi-monthly, or quarterly basis, whereas a humanitarian context may require more frequent, or singular and higher volume, transfers.[115] The ECTP experience indicates that aligning emergency top-up payments with social assistance payments contributed to the delay in the provision of humanitarian assistance in some locations. In other locations, the ECTP could not be disbursed in time to coincide with the routine payment cycle, so an additional disbursement cycle had to be implemented. The existing system is dependent on the workload and motivation levels of VDC/municipality ward secretaries, and this could be an impediment to the smooth functioning of an SRSP system. In some cases, the decision to delay the ECTP payments until the next round of routine social assistance payments was taken by local-level implementers. This choice was driven by the significant disincentives in regard to conducting additional payment cycles, given the work these entail and the burden of their already heavy workloads (which were, anyway, heightened by the crisis). Budgeting adequate resources to reduce workload, enhance security, improve morale, and cover costs likely to be incurred by the staff can help with overcoming this challenge. Clearly articulated and agreed SOPs, developed under a legislative and regulatory framework specifying institutional mandates, roles and responsibilities, would also ensure local government administrators were clear on their tasks and responsibilities.

DFID, who have an interest in the formalisation of electronic payment systems, have initiated a programme (*Sakchyam*) in eight of 34 planned districts, which aims to improve financial access.[116] The programme expects to provide 'Greater access to a range of financial services for enterprises and households'. Some aspects of this programme have the potential to strengthen the payment system for a SRSP in the future. These include:

- increasing linkages between cooperatives, micro-finance institutions, banks, and wholesale lenders;
- expanding services via an expanded rural agent network;
- designing and launching financial literacy initiatives and mobile financial services; and
- facilitating capacity enhancement programmes with financial intermediaries.

After the earthquakes, this programme launched approximately 140 point of sale devices (branchless banking touch-points) to their agents across 14 earthquake-affected districts, to help

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[115] Nepal's social assistance is disbursed three times a year, i.e. every four months.
[116] DFID (2016) 'About Sakchyam'. London: United Kingdom.

people access funds for humanitarian assistance and remittances. The programme envisages that these channels could potentially be used to receive social assistance payments and humanitarian assistance in the future. Although the efficiency and effectiveness of this programme are yet to be ascertained, increasing financial services penetration, for example via branchless banking, has the potential to strengthen the payment system for a shock-responsive system in Nepal.

Unlike in-kind assistance, cash transfers are prone to higher scrutiny, owing to current prejudices and misperceptions (see also Sub-section 4.7). This was very evident during the fieldwork for this evaluation, where several national and regional officials noted that cash transfers cause dependency and are prone to misuse. Despite a significant body of evidence pointing to the contrary,[117] misperception and prejudice continue to be prevalent in many countries. In the case of the Nepal ECTP, the monitoring data collected by NEPAN confirm that a large proportion of the ECTP was used by the beneficiaries for meeting consumption needs (rather than being misspent).

There is thus a need for more and better quality advocacy for social protection, and dissemination of global and national evidence on the impacts and costs of cash transfers specifically, to be directed at all levels of Nepali society and governance structures (see Section 4.7). However, at the local level, greater involvement of the Social Protection District Coordination Committee (SPDCC) and Village Social Protection Coordination Committee in sharing information about payments and assisting with distributions could help enhance transparency and debunk some of the myths about the negative impacts of cash transfers.[118] Although these committees were formed to facilitate the implementation of social assistance in the country, they are not proactively involved by the DDCs and VDCs. A stronger role in these committees, or any other body that represents the community, could help strengthen transparency of payment systems in a SRSP mechanism.

4.5.4   M&E

Routine social assistance programmes should incorporate a functioning monitoring component. This may be largely built on the back of the programme MIS but should provide regular reporting to show the number and value of payments made, and receipt of payments, and should keep a log of case management (including entry and exit from the programme) and complaints and grievances. It should preferably include disaggregation of these data by relevant dimensions, such as geographical location. The MIS should also be able to provide analysis of the characteristics of the beneficiary population (such as age, gender, and ethnic group). Such a system could be bolstered further by more in-depth monitoring activities, such as spot-checks or routine surveys of random or purposively selected beneficiary sub-populations, and/or qualitative or quantitative interviews with programme implementers and implementing agencies. These may be conducted by the programme itself and/or an independent partner. In addition, there must be an auditory trail to track payments and expenditures, and to reconcile accounts. In times of shock, this system has to be able to cope with expansion.

For the ECTP, UNICEF introduced a few additional monitoring measures to those used by the routine social assistance programmes. These included real-time monitoring by UNICEF staff and NEPAN DFPs, plus an independent monitoring survey delivered by NEPAN (see Sections 3.1.4 and 3.2.4). Moving forward, it is clear that the monitoring system for the five social assistance programmes requires significant investment, both for its own sake and especially if it is to become shock-responsive. The World Bank is currently supporting this agenda via its Strengthening

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[117] See, for example, a recent infographic produced by UNICEF, 'Cash Transfers: Myths vs. Reality. See also Davis *et al*. (2016) 'From evidence to action: The story of cash transfers and impact evaluation in sub-Saharan Africa', FAO, UNICEF and Oxford University Press.

[118] The constitution and role of these committees are elaborated in social security guidelines 2072 (see pages 21–25 at www.docr.gov.np/sites/default/files/Social%20Security%20Karyabidhi_2_1.pdf).

Systems for Social Protection and Civil Registration Project. The project appraisal document (PAD) identifies that the existing monitoring system for the social assistance programmes is currently weak and inefficient, and it gives some of the reasons for these failings:

> *The manual and decentralized record keeping of beneficiary information is a major hurdle for addressing issues of duplication, under-coverage, and weak oversight facing the administration of the [social assistance programmes]. The District Development Committees (DDCs), headed by MOFALD appointed LDOs, are supposed to oversee the operations. In practice, however, the DDCs' roles are limited to serving as intermediaries between the VDCs and the ministry for reporting beneficiary and payment information and managing flow of funds to the VDCs for each round of payments processed three times a year. MOFALD's weak administrative systems has given rise to a host of problems, both real and perceived, including lingering suspicions of duplication, alleged leakage of funds, and delayed benefit payments. Furthermore, the World Bank's recent analysis has indicated considerable under-coverage of around 30–40 percent of eligible beneficiaries of senior citizen and single woman pensions, with the incidence slightly worse at the lower end of the income distribution.*[119]

Nepal's civil registration system captures five vital events: birth, death, marriage, divorce, and migration. It has the potential to act as the foundation for national identities and also to be linked to the social assistance programmes' MIS in order to both verify eligibility and target those population groups that are currently excluded. That the civil registration system in Nepal is undeveloped is one of the major reasons for the exclusion of potential beneficiaries of the social assistance programmes. The decentralised and paper-based recording of documents collected during registration limits the potential usage of the information to generate vital statistics for planning and implementing purposes. Limited awareness among the population and difficulty in accessing local registration offices have led to low registration rates and coverage.[120]

The World Bank project seeks to remedy these problems by creating a population register that would link and thereby support the DoCR's core functions of civil registrations and delivery of social assistance. Strengthening these systems will have the knock-on effect of vastly improving the capacity of the programme to monitor and evaluate its performance and impact, including in times of shock-induced crisis and emergency scale-up. It will also potentially facilitate horizontal scale-up or piggybacking of other emergency response initiatives on government systems, as well as coordination in this regard. Furthermore, a functioning population register underpinned by comprehensive and up-to-date civil registration would facilitate people's access to legal identity and public services beyond social protection. It is thereby essential for the development of an SRSP system that this agenda continues to be supported and brought to fruition, and that development partners coordinate to support government in this regard.

Improving the registration system and programme MISs will enable adequate monitoring for social assistance programmes. It will also help facilitate evaluation, including robust impact evaluation. For example, the MIS and social registry will provide an up-to-date sample frame.

Very few robust impact evaluations have been carried out in respect of social assistance programmes in Nepal. UNICEF have conducted an impact assessment of their child grant cash transfer programme in Karnali, which found a positive impact on birth registration rates for children under two years of age.[121] But beyond this, robust quantitative or high quality qualitative evidence

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[119] World Bank (2016) 'Strengthening Systems for Social Protection and Civil Registration Project. Project Appraisal Document'. Washington DC: United States of America. p. 3.
[120] Ibid. pp. 3–4.
[121] Hagen-Zanker, *et al.* (2015) 'How does Nepal's Child Grant work for Dalit children and their families? A mixed methods assessment of programme delivery and impact in Bajura and Saptari'. London: Overseas Development Institute.

on the impact of the extant social assistance programmes is largely absent. Impact evaluation and operational performance assessment are crucial to ensure programmes can achieve their objectives, ensure accountability for investments, and obtain political support. There is thus a need for more robust evidence to be produced in order to build knowledge around social protection and support both ongoing policy development and advocacy.

4.6   Linking the social protection system with early warning systems

For a social protection system to be responsive to shocks, it should be able to anticipate shocks and prepare a response in advance. Many disaster-prone countries have an early warning system that alerts the government and humanitarian stakeholders in the country about potential or impending crises.

In Nepal, NeKSAP was set up 15 years ago by the WFP and the GoN. This system is housed in the MoAD, and is managed in close coordination with the NPC. NeKSAP monitors the food security and health situation across the country three times each year (March, July, and November). Information is collected simultaneously in all districts of the country and analysed under the leadership of the CDO in each district. It is a multi-sector, multi-stakeholder consensus-based exercise, with the Ministries of Agriculture, Livestock, Health, Local development, and Forestry participating, along with relevant UN agencies working in those districts. The local Chambers of Commerce are also involved in this process, and contribute information on market price trends for essential commodities (mainly food items). The information thus collected is consolidated by a steering committee comprising different line ministries in Kathmandu, and is used for making early warning predictions for slow onset crises down to the VDC level. The system has a provision of calling *ad hoc* food security network meetings in the event of a sudden shock. The results of this early warning system are mainly used by stakeholders working in the health, nutrition, and agriculture sectors.

Apart from NeKSAP, there do not seem to be other active early warning systems in the country. However, some agencies, such as the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) have access to real-time data using satellite imagery that can help with planning a scale-up of the social protection system. This satellite imagery is at times used by NeKSAP to overlay the data collected from districts to determine parameters such as the area and number of people affected. Other than ICIMOD, the Department of Water-Induced Disaster Management, in collaboration with the ADB, has conducted mapping to identify communities that are vulnerable to floods. The National Emergency Operation Centre within the MoHA has the mandate for disaster preparedness. This centre plays a coordination role and holds data on vulnerability to disasters, which are published regularly.[122]

The existence of such efforts at vulnerability mapping indicate the potential to consolidate these efforts to strengthen the early warning system in Nepal, which, if linked with the social protection system, could help to create a SRSP system that can prepare itself in advance of a crisis. As mentioned earlier, coordination between different line ministries could be a challenge. For this reason, it may be useful to engage equally with key ministries (such as MoHA and MoFALD) and

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[122] National Emergency Operations Centre publishes data through the Nepal DRR Portal, the SAHANA Disaster Information Management System (SDIMIS), Flood Forecasting, Forest Fire Detection and Monitoring in Nepal, and the Kathmandu Valley Earthquake Emergency and Response Management System platforms www.neoc.gov.np/en/ and http://drrportal.gov.np/). The National Emergency Operation Centre provides information on all types of disaster. The DRR Portal publishes data on type of disaster, incident the date it occurred, casualties, number of people missing, number of people affected, estimated loss, number of people injured and houses destroyed. The SDIMS publishes data on incidents, assessments and response provided. The Department of Hydrology and Meteorology forecasts floods. The Forest Fire Detection and Monitoring in Nepal provides information about fires by districts and in protected areas.

to work on SOPs that clearly lay out roles and responsibilities during emergencies. It is equally important to invest adequate time and resources, for such inter-ministerial work to succeed.

4.7   Government awareness about social protection

In the fiscal year 2014/15, Nepal spent around 2.4% of its GDP (around $500 million) on social protection, representing around 11.86% of total government expenditure. About 28% of this expenditure was devoted to social assistance (about $140 million; 0.7% GDP); the majority (68%) went to civil service pensions and other benefits, while the remainder (4%) went to scholarships.[123] This level of expenditure is representative of the South Asian regional average of 2.4% of GDP[124], but much lower than the OECD average—OECD countries spend around 21% of their GDP on social protection.[125]

Despite rising levels of investment (in 2016 the GoN announced it would double the value of the social assistance grants) and the length of time some of these programmes have been operating— the social pension is over 20 years old— awareness about the value, aims, and objectives of social protection within the GoN appears to be low. Social protection, and social assistance in particular, was largely viewed by government respondents as an obligation – a duty, for example, to support those in need or to repay older persons for the contributions to society and the economy that they had made over their lifetimes – rather than as a profitable investment in human capital development and aggregate demand in the domestic economy.

Many government stakeholders also expounded a familiar set of worries around misuse of cash transfers by beneficiaries, and noted social assistance as a cause of dependency. There was a sense among respondents that social assistance negatively impacted production, and created significant liabilities that are difficult to roll-back. One respondent stated that this perception was not based on evidence but was more 'intuitive'.

Some respondents mentioned the need to focus resources through poverty targeting, but there were conflicting views on this, including even from the same respondent. A number of respondents discussed the issue of poverty targeting but were unable to reconcile a preference for this targeting with the current gap in administrative capacity that would be required to implement it. There was widespread knowledge about the 'poverty cards' that the Ministry of Poverty Alleviation have developed, but some expressed scepticism as to the viability of using these for poverty targeting purposes in practice.[126] There was a recognition of the data quality challenges, as well as the cost and administrative capacity challenges that would be required to implement this targeting. Government respondents that mentioned these challenges acknowledged that if the GoN was going to provide poverty cards to people for the purposes of targeting social assistance programmes, they would need to be regularly updated and audited.

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[123] Budget Speech 2016/17 and Economic Survey 2015/16. The Road to Recovery gives projections of slightly different values, estimating that some 2.67% GDP would be spent on social protection in FY2014/15, representing 11.29% of total government spending. Of this, 25% was projected to be spent on social assistance.
[124] World Bank (2013) 'Nepal Report on Human Development'. Washington DC: United States of America.
[125] OECD (2016) 'Social Spending.' https://data.oecd.org/socialexp/social-spending.htm. [Accessed 16 December 2016].
[126] In 2013, the MoPAC started a census in 25 poorest districts as identified by Small Area Estimates of Poverty. Data collection has been completed for these districts and the government was supposed to start distributing cards by mid-December 2016. However, the card distribution process has not yet begun. Similarly, the government has a plan to conduct a census in the remaining 50 districts of the country in the current fiscal year. However, the work has not yet started. The poverty scorecard works by identifying poor households using proxy means testing (PMT). A PMT model links the wellbeing of a household to its measurable, easily verifiable and non-manipulative household attributes, such as the type of outer walls, roof, and toilet it has. The data collected by enumerators are entered and the PMT score is generated for each and every household. The households that fall below the corresponding poverty line for Nepal will receive the card. (www.onlinekhabar.com/2016/11/504105/#.WDPPds8ywns.facebook).

Similarly, some respondents mentioned the use of conditional cash transfers as politically preferable, but again, there was little understanding about the 'conditions for conditions' that would make this feasible.[127]

Among donor organisations, there was a general concurrence of attitudes towards poverty targeting and the challenges of implementing it, and especially with regard to the government poverty cards. However, not all donor attitudes are clear cut. The World Bank are currently in the process of conducting a vulnerability survey to assess levels and characteristics of vulnerability in the country, which they hope can then help them to assess whether poverty targeting is a viable idea in Nepal.[128] The World Bank Nepal Report on Human Development Access provided a situation analysis of social protection in the country, assessing each programme in relation to how well it is targeted towards the poor. It finds that while coverage of social assistance programmes is higher and less regressive than social insurance in the country, leakage to the non-poor is significant.[129] This may indicate the World Bank's institutional preference for poverty targeting.

A feature of the existing social assistance programmes in Nepal is geographic targeting. This relates primarily to the employment scheme in Karnali. The ECTP was also geographically targeted to earthquake-affected areas. If the social protection system is to be adapted to respond to shocks in the future, it will very likely entail geographic targeting. Furthermore, now that there is a commitment from the GoN to scale up the child grant nationally, there is an ongoing discussion about how to sequence this scale-up. UNICEF have proposed using the HPI as a way of ranking districts in order to prioritise areas for scaling up the universal child grant, although they recognise that these data are now old and do not take into account the impact of the earthquakes themselves (see also Section 4.1 above).[130] This approach was partially an effort by UNICEF to steer away from sequencing scale-up by targeting within districts, which the DoCR were considering. While within-district targeting was part of the government thinking on sequencing the scale-up of the universal child grant, government stakeholders also recognised that such an approach was not politically viable. They argued that policies must cover whole districts because providing a programme to one VDC but not another in the same district would be highly unsatisfactory to local government. Since the interviews conducted for this study were completed, MoFALD has accepted and approved the approach proposed by UNICEF.

Ultimately, these attitudes towards, and lack of knowledge about, social protection, especially amongst central government, culminate in low transfer levels (even accounting for the recent doubling of the value of the grants) and inadequately resourced service delivery across the system, which constrains impact and compromises the ability of the social protection system to achieve its aims and objectives in the country. There is thus a need to build awareness within the GoN around

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[127] Pellerano, L. and Barca, V. (2014). 'Does one size fit all? The conditions for conditionality in cash transfers', Working Paper, OPM.

[128] The vulnerability study will be based on a multi-round panel survey, conducted nationwide but excluding urban areas. This comprises a representative sample of around 7,000 households. At the time of our interviews with the World Bank the first round was ongoing, and the first report was said to be due in November 2016.

[129] World Bank (2013) 'Nepal Report on Human Development'. Washington DC: United States of America. GIZ are also currently supporting a project to expand social health insurance in the country, for which there is currently a draft bill on the table which includes provision for subsidies based on the Ministry of Poverty Alleviation poverty cards. However, while GIZ did acknowledge that there are problems with the government poverty cards—data are now old, the definition of poverty used is questionable —it was also clear that the respondents did not have a detailed understanding of how poverty is measured, nor did they fully comprehend how poverty targeting worked in practice. The health insurance subsidy would depend on a national database of poverty status.

[130] The World Bank post-disaster assessment calculates that the earthquakes increased poverty by 2%–3% nationally. UNICEF has recalculated this using some crude assumptions for the affected districts and estimate a much larger impact of 14%.

social protection generally, and SRSP in particular, as well as among the wider public, including civil society and the general population.

To this end, development partners especially spoke about the need for a coordinated research agenda. The NFSP does list among its strategies for achieving its objectives the need to 'expand the knowledge base around social protection', but it does not start to articulate any clear or detailed agenda.[131] Among the priority areas for research it does list are:

> *periodic assessments to identify the poorest and most vulnerable population, to identify any coverage gaps, to assess targeting methods and delivery mechanisms and evaluate the impact of programmes rigorously. Efforts should be made to identify structural barriers to identification and registration. Administrative systems will be modified or enhanced to include provision for providing timely and robust data for monitoring implementation and coverage.*

As discussed above, the World Bank is already fulfilling part of this remit through its vulnerability assessment, which aims to identify gaps in coverage of vulnerable populations in order to inform reform of social assistance programming. In addition, some development partners have vocalised the need for generating a national shock or disaster profile. This would map and analyse the type of shocks that occur, their frequency and severity, geographical distribution, and impact on different population groups (such as men/women, children, Dalits, and ethnic minorities). The National Emergency Operation Centre, which holds the mandate for disaster preparedness, apparently publishes data on vulnerability to disasters, so this is a potential starting point.

The findings from this evaluation point to a number of additional priority areas for social protection research in Nepal, to support the development of the sector as well as to build an SRSP system. The following would support much needed advocacy work with the GoN to build awareness, knowledge, and understanding about the costs and benefits of social protection, including investing in disaster risk management and SPSR:

- **Impact evaluation:** While there is a vast body of evidence internationally around social protection and social assistance, there is little robust evidence about the impact of social protection programmes in Nepal, either on households/individuals or the local economy.
- **Microsimulation:** Existing benefit levels are low, so changes in various programme parameters, including transfer values, eligibility criteria, and coverage rates, could be modelled to assess the cost and potential impact of such changes on dimensions such as consumption, poverty, and productive investments, including investments in human capital. Ideally, modelling of impact would build on robust evidence of impact. Simulations can include modelling the costs and impact of emergency scale-up options in response to shocks.
- **Fiscal space analysis:** Investment in social protection and social assistance is relatively low (see above). There is a need to assess the fiscal space requirements under different scenarios (ideally building on the simulation work referred to above), including investment in SRSP. Fiscal space analysis would help identify resourcing gaps over the short, medium, and long term, and thus the potential for coordinating development partner contributions and investments in supporting systems.
- **Institutional capacity assessment and functional review:** There is a need to analyse operational processes and identify and assess administrative capacity requirements and gaps,

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[131] National Steering Committee on Social Protection (2016). 'National Framework for Social Protection'. [Draft]. Additionally, one of the functions that the NFSP gives to the SPWC is to 'Identify priority issues/programs for research and evaluation and secure resources'.

alongside the cost of adequate service delivery for social protection and assistance, including for SRSP in times of emergency.

4.8   Coordination

As the analysis above illustrates on multiple occasions, coordination at all levels is crucial for SRSP. At the national level, the NFSP proposes a coordinating body (see Section 4.8), but, as discussed, there is a lack of detail in the draft strategy as to the precise functions and relations of this body with other key institutions, such as OCHA, the CCG, and SPTT. At the sub-national level, there is a need to coordinate programme implementing staff in times of emergency, whether they be government or non-government (e.g. LDOs and municipality CEOs with NGO staff).

Despite the many challenges associated with effective coordination, there is some cause for optimism because the conditions for coordination are positive at this moment: diverse stakeholders noted that the ECTP has provided proof of concept, and the interest of the GoN in social assistance, at least nominally, appears relatively strong. This positive disposition is embodied in the government's commitment to gradually scale up a universal child grant nationally, even if financial commitments are not yet adequate and social protection is not always well understood or supported by government actors.

Meanwhile, relations between development partners (particularly UNICEF, the World Bank and DFID, as the major investors in the sector) around social protection are in a positive place. The SPTT is considered to be in a phase of reinvigoration, and the ECTP has provoked interest in the fact, and belief, that it might be leveraged to build more momentum for advocacy and support for social protection within the country. The CCG has been reinvigorated, with a general consensus amongst stakeholders that the CCG should form a permanent sub-group servicing the sectoral clusters, with permanent 'cash' representation in each cluster. It is acknowledged that it is unlikely committed government collaboration to the CCG can be secured in the short to medium term, so it has been agreed that the immediate focus will be on providing support to government to develop protocols and guidelines around cash responses by humanitarian actors.

The learnings for social protection from the 2015 earthquakes are thus clustered around three points: (a) the need to integrate social protection into national disaster management frameworks (see Section 4.6 above); (b) the need to support government to develop SOPs for implementation; and (c) the need to build capacity among humanitarian actors to understand and plan for better support, alignment and coordination with the regular social protection system.[132]

However, even given these relatively positive conditions, coordination remains a big challenge. Almost every respondent, whether representing the government or a development partner, acknowledged the inherent challenges associated with trying to coordinate different government ministries, or between government, donor and NGO partners. Respondents recognised that government ministries and departments tend to operate in silos and to be quite territorial over both their work and funding within and across sectors. Roles and responsibilities, and lines of authority and accountability will need to be clearly specified in order to meet SRSP system institutional mandates.

This said, the social protection sector might learn from other examples of multi-sector coordination. The experience of UNICEF and the NPC in coordinating the Multi-Sector Nutrition Plan provides an

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[132] Ferrie, G. and Gautam, B.R. (2015) 'Cash Preparedness in Nepal Lesson from the 2014 Earthquake.' Kathmandu: Nepal.

opportunity for learning in this regard, and helps place UNICEF in a good position to play a lead role in pushing coordination.

Priority for coordination at this stage should be around finalising the NFSP and then supporting the creation of the bodies it envisages. Developing the details of the NFSP and then operationalising the plans via supporting the development of SOPs can be a practical way in which to start this multi-stakeholder engagement. Linking social protection to the DRM and early warning system is another area for priority coordination.

On the development partner side, maintaining momentum for the SPTT and, under the remit of the NFSP, developing a common, coordinated research agenda would be another way to support the NFSP by building the evidence base to support advocacy and awareness activities.

Finally, developing the social assistance programmes' MIS, alongside development of the social registry, is another area for priority coordination. This should include support to the national system of vital registrations.

4.9   Conclusions and lessons learned

The experience of the ECTP has shown that regular social protection systems in Nepal can be used as an effective mechanism for responding to shocks, as part of a broader comprehensive package of interventions for both the immediate and recovery phases.

In practice, utilising the social protection system to respond to shocks involves a trade-off with some of the key criteria underpinning humanitarian response, such as timeliness, coverage of the affected population, and adequacy of the support provided. Mitigating the extent to which this is the case requires a legislative framework and institutional architecture that is built for purpose: that is, fully in line with a vision for SRSP. SRSP also requires a funding mechanism to which multiple donors can contribute. The system infrastructure needs to be similarly tailored, in particular underpinned by a functioning civil registrations system and an MIS that is connected across programmes, for instance via a single or social registry. Additional resources will also be required, not only to fund scale-up but also to finance its implementation. These additional expenditures need to be costed and budgeted in advance.

Beyond resourcing and the development of these systems, frameworks and architecture, the key challenge is coordination. It is to this challenge that the legislative framework and institutional architecture must be addressed. It should clearly define the respective mandates, roles and responsibilities of all the institutions involved. In order for coordination to function, each process in the scalable system should be articulated in an agreed set of SOPs that lay out the steps in the process, the actors involved, and the resources required to implement it.

The simplest form of scale-up is vertical expansion. However, while potentially facilitating delivery of large volumes of cash to many people in disaster-affected areas in a relatively short amount of time, this sort of expansion does not necessarily target all affected population groups. Horizontal scale-up and/or coordination with other interventions (e.g. those of NGOs) is required to mitigate this limitation. Both of these are hugely challenging (especially in times of crisis, when the systems of all parties are under heightened strain). The complexity and challenges associated with horizontal scale-up or coordinating multiple interventions means that doing so takes time, and therefore potentially compromises the swiftness of the response. Mitigating this problem requires forward planning and the building of systems to support rapid scale-up (and scale-down after the crisis has abated).

The building of SRSP in Nepal is thus a long-term vision. It will require investment in policy and legislation, institutional architecture, communications and financial services infrastructure, research, and the technical and administrative capacity of implementing agencies.

In implementing the ECTP in response to the 2015 earthquakes, and working alongside MoFALD, UNICEF has provided proof of concept that SRSP can work in Nepal. This evaluation has highlighted the strengths of such an ECTP, as well as the areas for improvement in regard to its delivery. UNICEF's leading role in delivering this complex programme in the face of a significant natural disaster is commendable. This research has shown how UNICEF's efforts here have enabled the organisation to establish itself strategically as a key actor in supporting the development of a government-backed SRSP system.

In addition, the added benefit of improved birth registration data in the target districts has provided impetus to the development of a universal child grant, which is a major advance for UNICEF's agenda in Nepal. Should this impetus translate into actionable policies and tangible programmes for the benefit of children—and there are encouraging signs to suggest this is the case—then the ECTP will have provided a clear platform for UNICEF to further its strategic goals in the country. To this end, UNICEF currently has good relations with MoFALD/the DoCR, as well as with the other main development partner investors in social protection in Nepal, that can now be leveraged to push forward the SRSP agenda.

At the same time, there are a number of questions that remain, the answers to which should inform the forthcoming agenda. These include understanding the risk and vulnerability profile of the country better and estimating some of the costs and benefits of the investments to be made. This will help orient government and development partners as to the question of whether it is more or less efficient to maintain a permanent, scalable social protection system, as opposed to setting up a temporary humanitarian response at short notice in the face of each crisis. In the medium term, a hybrid of these two extremes looks both preferable and viable.

Some of the items for a proposed research agenda above (Section 4.7) would provide evidence to help start answering the questions around the costs and benefits of SRSP.

4.10   Recommendations

We make the following recommendations for UNICEF, based on the evidence and findings from this study. Note that these recommendations are comprehensive and extensive by design, reflecting not only the scope for UNICEF's role in the future but also highlighting the areas that require work more broadly. The evaluation team acknowledges that it might not be feasible for UNICEF to address all these recommendations on their own, but nonetheless recommends these actions as potential areas for consideration not only for UNICEF but also for the government as well as development partners interested in bolstering a shock responsive social protection system.

Support the finalisation of NFSP and the creation of a new institutional architecture, as proposed in the final agreed framework

The NFSP sets out to address the complex and fragmented landscape for social protection in Nepal by establishing institutional bodies with the mandate to steer and direct social protection policy and programming. For this purpose, it proposes the creation of an SPPCC, and a SPWC, alongside a Social Protection Secretariat. These proposals are not yet finalised and fully agreed.[133] However, in principle, it is essential that a rational institutional architecture is created, with

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[133] At the time of writing of this report, certain amendments to the institutional architecture laid out in the NFSP (as described in Section 4.4) were being discussed.

mandates and roles and responsibilities clearly specified. NPC is leading the finalisation of the NFSP.

UNICEF should support this process by providing comments to the draft framework, liaising with the NPC to ensure the NFSP is finalised in a timely manner, and if necessary aiding the NPC by coordinating other donor partners through the SPTT to ensure their comments to the draft framework are also provided and included.

Support the new NFSP institutional architecture with a medium- to long-term technical assistance package

The draft NFSP establishes the SPWC as the main body to carry out the work of implementing the social protection policy framework. To this end, the SPWC is mandated to:

- Cost and prioritise programmes for reforms;
- Develop and implement a monitoring and evaluation system;
- Monitor implementation of the policy directives;
- Advise on the development of social protection related operational policies and guidelines;
- Recommend minimum standards/regulations of SP programmes;
- Convene prior to and during the budget discussions to review SP policies and programmes and make recommendations to the Policy Coordination Committee;
- Identify priority issues/programmes for research and evaluation and secure resources;
- Ensure that development partners' programmes are aligned with this framework.

The SWPC will thus be tasked with a tremendous amount of work in order to make necessary reforms to the sector and develop it to become more shock-responsive. They will likely face significant capacity constraints that will limit their ability to achieve these aims in a timely fashion.

To aid the SWPC to fulfil its mandate, UNICEF should thus put in place a medium- to long-term TA package in order to provide support and resources to ensure:

- The research agenda is coordinated across government and donor partners and identified research questions are answered through quality studies and analysis:
  - ο Section 4.7 above highlights some of these research needs, but two areas merit prioritisation: impact evaluation and institutional capacity review:
    - There appears to be almost no evidence of impact for the social assistance programmes in Nepal. Such evidence is vital to inform current policy development as well as any reform of the sector;
    - This study has highlighted a variety of capacity constraints in programme implementation for the social assistance programmes. If the system is going to be developed to become shock responsive, an institutional capacity assessment and function review should be carried out to assess capacity gaps and cost capacity requirements for SRSP;
- A robust M&E framework is developed and implemented;
  - ο The M&E framework should include links to the early warning and DRM systems in order to inform SRSP expansion (see below);
- MIS is developed to enable SRSP expansion;
- An appropriate SRSP financing mechanism is developed (see below);
- Donor partners are coordinated via the SPTT and CCG (see below);

- Appropriate consolidation and harmonisation agenda is pursued: the social protection landscape is currently highly fragmented. If or as a more comprehensive reform process is identified, there will likely be a need to harmonise operational processes across different programmes as far as possible, and perhaps even consolidate programmes across different departments and ministries.

Develop linkages between social protection and early warning systems and DRM in the country

NeKSAP monitors the food security and health situation across the country using information that is collected thrice yearly in all districts and analysed at the CDO level. It is a multi-sector, multi-stakeholder consensus-based exercise with the Ministries of Agriculture, Livestock, Health, Local development, and Forestry participating, along with relevant UN agencies working in those districts. The local Chambers of Commerce are also involved in this process, and contribute information on market price trends for essential commodities. The information thus collected is consolidated by a steering committee comprising different line ministries, and is used for making early warning prediction for slow onset crises.

The new institution established by the NFSP (e.g. the SPWC) will need to understand this system and explore the ways in which it can be utilised for scaling up the social protection system in response to current or anticipated shocks. For example, if food prices are spiking or a food security alert is in effect, the social protection system could be set to scale up in particular districts, based on thresholds established via analysis of historical data.

As part of a package of TA to the SWPC, UNICEF should commission a study to investigate these systems and develop a mechanism that enables a link between them and the SP system to ensure rapid response in case of a shock.

Continue to support the SPTT, taking a lead role to facilitate coordination around social protection and SRSP research agenda and cross-sector advocacy

The SPTT is the primary forum in which Nepal's development partners can contribute to the national social protection agenda. Ideally, the role of the SPTT will be formally specified in the final NFSP. UNICEF's investments in social protection, including its experience of implementing the ECTP and the relationship it has built with MoFALD and the DoCR, place it in a prime position to play a lead role within the SPTT going forward. This position will be further strengthened should UNICEF provide TA to the SWPC as recommended above.

UNICEF should facilitate coordination around the development of infrastructure to build towards SRSP and cross-sector advocacy. This would entail coordinating a joint partner research agenda to fill some of the evidence gaps and build understanding and awareness around social protection within the GoN.

Other donor partners within the SPTT are well placed to lead on some other aspects of the social protection and SRSP agenda due to the nature of their own investments in the sector. This would create a natural division of labour between the partners. Coordination around the development of an MIS and the social registry could thus be led by the World Bank, and coordination around the development of payment systems infrastructure could be led by DFID.

Depending on the nature of any TA provided by UNICEF to the SWPC, there will be a need to coordinate within the SPTT around the establishment of a suitable financing mechanism, and potentially around a sector consolidation and harmonisation agenda.

Develop a financing mechanism for SRSP

For SRSP to develop in Nepal, it is likely that an appropriate financing mechanism will be required. The SPTT should discuss this issue with the GoN via the SWPC (or other mandated body).

Given its experience with the ECTP, UNICEF should coordinate this discussion on the donor side, and especially if it is providing a comprehensive package of medium- or long-term TA to the SWPC.

Further areas in need of development investment include:

- social assistance programme communications; and
- development of SOPs for SRSP functional processes.

For the latter, UNICEF has started developing SOPs for some functional processes, but further procedures surrounding other processes (e.g. MIS, monitoring systems) will need to be developed by the relevant institutions once those processes have been developed.

For the monitoring systems and communications, UNICEF has generated a lot of useful experience and expertise via the ECTP, which it could draw on to build capacity within MoFALD and the SWPC around these functions, including for both routine social protection programming and SRSP.

To conclude, it is clear that the development of a SRSP system in Nepal is a long-term effort. It will require both significant investments by GoN and significant support from the donor partners. UNICEF, having provided proof of concept and de facto led the development of SRSP to date in the country, is now well placed to support the government to push forward with this agenda, first via the provision of a tailored package of TA to GoN and second by playing a lead coordination role amongst the donor partners.

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Annex A   Key evaluation findings utilising the DAC criteria

Table 9 presents a summary of the main findings of our evaluation of UNICEF Nepal's ECTP, highlighting the extent to which each key evaluation question was answered during both phases, and specifying its relationship with the DAC criteria for humanitarian assistance which formed the overall framework for this evaluation.

Table 9:   Key evaluation findings utilising the DAC criteria

Process	Key evaluation questions	Phase 1 findings	Phase 2 findings	DAC criteria
Assessment	What were the reasons behind the choice to use cash as part of the emergency response?	Unconditional cash transfers were adopted since markets seemed to be working in the target districts, after an initial disruption, and since it supported UNICEF's strong interest in strengthening the child grants in Nepal.	Unconditional cash transfers were adopted since markets seemed to be working in the target districts, after an initial disruption, and since it supported UNICEF's strong interest in strengthening the child grants in Nepal.	Relevance

Design	Was the programme design (including targeting, value and regularity of transfer, payment system, grievance and communication mechanism etc.) appropriate to meet the immediate and recovery needs of the affected population? How did the design decision for Phase 2 differ from Phase 1?	Phase 1 targeted the existing beneficiaries of the GoN's social assistance programme in 19 earthquake-affected districts. ECTP consciously decided to use the existing registration list, though this led to exclusion of (i) those who fulfilled the criteria for receiving the social protection benefits but were not registered in the system at the time of the earthquake; and (ii) those who were affected by the crisis but did not meet the social protection eligibility criteria. The amount transferred was useful in meeting a proportion of basic needs but it was not adequate to cover most basic needs as per humanitarian standards for the stipulated four-month period. The rationale for calculating the value of the transfer seems to be largely based on the case load of beneficiaries, and not on a systematic analysis of the gap in needs and the duration of needs of the affected population in the first phase of crisis. There was not a need for extensive programme communication since this phase was envisioned as a 'top-up' to the regular social protection payments. However, delays in implementation meant that the transfers were made separately, and people were often uninformed about the reason for, or source of, the funds, suggesting communication gaps.	Phase 2 targeted all under-five children in 11 of the most earthquake-affected districts. This criteria did not explicitly cover all those affected by the earthquake but given budgetary constraints and UNICEF's mandate, this was a pragmatic choice. The transfer was useful in meeting a small proportion of basic needs for households in the recovery phase. The rationale for setting the value of the transfer at NPR 4000 is unclear and does not seem to be based on any systematic analysis of a gap in needs and the duration of needs of the affected people in the recovery phase. This phase had a detailed communication strategy that entailed informing the people about the programme, its eligibility criteria, requirements for registering in the programme, operational details, as well as a grievance mechanism system using an SMS platform. A range of communication media were used but the most effective communication medium was 'word of mouth' and very few beneficiaries used SMS, radio and printed media of communication.	Relevance

Process	Key evaluation questions	Phase 1 findings	Phase 2 findings	DAC criteria
Targeting / enrolment	To what extent did the cash transfer reach the target population? How did this differ between Phase 1 and Phase 2?	The ECTP was perhaps the largest humanitarian assistance by a single agency in Nepal. It covered a total population of over 430,000 beneficiaries in 19 earthquake-affected districts in the country.	Phase 2 was targeted at all children under the age of five years in the 11 severely affected districts. The coverage of Phase 2 was not clear at the time of drafting this report, but is estimated to be over 300,000 children. The census was unable to identify approximately 20% of eligible children. The remaining children were added to the programme through a re-registration exercise which directly involved VDC secretaries noting the names of missed children and forwarding them to the DDC. Targeting in both phases of the ECTP was not specifically focused on the disaster-affected population within the earthquake-affected districts, hence both phases excluded many who were in need of humanitarian assistance.	Relevance Coverage

Process	Key evaluation questions	Phase 1 findings	Phase 2 findings	DAC criteria
Implementation	How effective and efficient were the delivery processes for the cash payments and complementary booklets? What were the key changes from Phase 1 to Phase 2 in these processes?	The delivery processes for cash payments were the same as those used for regular social assistance, i.e. in person in VDCs and through banks in municipalities. The processes in VDCs placed the burden on VDC secretaries, who had to carry large amounts of cash back from the district centre, while the process in municipalities shifted the burden onto beneficiaries, who had to make trips to banks, often paying for transport, food and lodgings in the process. Reliance on an existing delivery process was useful as people were familiar with the key actors, and the actors were familiar with the role requirements. The delivery process was envisioned to coincide with the regular social protection payments, which would have made it cost-effective. However, this was not possible in half of the programme districts due to delays in funds disbursement from the centre and through banks. The process of delivering complementary booklets did not work. Booklets were reportedly too bulky to carry from the district centre to the villages and wards. In addition, in the face of delays, distributing funds was prioritised over distributing booklets.	The delivery processes for cash payments in Phase 2 were all in person through VDC secretaries or ward secretaries in municipalities. Given the additional administrative burden of the programme, UNICEF provided operational and monitoring costs of NPR 12,000 to each VDC, NPR 20,000 to each municipality, and NPR 40,000 to each DDC in the 11 programme districts. The payments were envisioned to coincide with the regular social protection payments in June 2016, but delays stemming initially from the approval process and financial reporting and liquidation by DDCs for Phase 1, and then subsequently the time taken to complete the census exercise, as well as gaps in the census data and re-registration processes, led to disbursements happening as late as November 2016, when the NEPAN PDM fieldwork was carried out.	Effectiveness Coordination Impact

Process	Key evaluation questions	Phase 1 findings	Phase 2 findings	DAC criteria
	How timely was the response in relation to the needs of different social groups? How did this compare with other cash and in-kind assistance in the wider humanitarian response?	The overall Phase 1 ECTP response was delayed by UNICEF's own standards of emergency response. The earliest payments (for meeting immediate needs) were made more or less within eight weeks of the second earthquake but it took six months to reach 99% of the beneficiaries. Cash transfer programmes by other agencies were also generally delayed in Nepal because of GoN's unclear position on cash transfer programmes in emergencies.	The programme implementation guidelines stated that the distribution must be complete by 30 June 2016 at the latest, whereas this was not the case. The transfer started in June but was still ongoing in November 2016.	

| Monitoring | What kind of monitoring mechanisms were in place? How were they implemented and how effective were they?

How did this change from Phase 1 to Phase 2? | Real-time monitoring was conducted by UNICEF, GoN, NEPAN district representatives and Nepal scouts. PDM was carried out by an independent third-party, NEPAN.

A comprehensive M&E plan was developed at the start of the programme. This was largely focused on processes and operations of the ECTP and included real-time monitoring by multiple actors (UNICEF, GoN, NEPAN, and DoCR/MoFALD). The information was then collated by UNICEF centrally and used for addressing bottlenecks in operationalising the programme.

Although many actors were involved in the monitoring process the specific roles and responsibilities were not clearly demarcated, with the result that some areas were visited several times were others were not visited at all.

Respondents at the community level were unaware of any monitoring activities in their area.

The PDM report was shared by UNICEF with LDOs and DDC officials at the time of initiating Phase 2. However, almost no respondents (other than those from UNICEF) consulted as part of our research reported seeing the report.

The programme relied on the regular social protection system's grievance redressal mechanism through VDC secretaries and DDC staff.

Financial monitoring was conducted by checking utilisation of the budget and cash | Real-time monitoring was conducted by UNICEF, GoN, and NEPAN district representatives. PDM was again conducted by NEPAN.

A comprehensive M&E plan was designed for Phase 2 as well.

Although monitoring processes were similar across the two phases, an SMS-based system was also used for monitoring in Phase 2 since beneficiary phone numbers were collected during the census exercise. However, this platform had limited success due to the use of Roman Nepali script and the reliance on smartphones, which are not extremely common.

At the time of writing this report, the PDM data had not been analysed and the financial reconciliation reports from DDCs had not been submitted.

The information from real-time monitoring was used to address implementation challenges and these were manifold in the beneficiary identification stage. Based largely on the information gathered for process monitoring in both phases a SOP has been developed by UNICEF in Nepal for implementing ECTP in future.

The programme developed a grievance redressal system through an SMS platform, though beneficiaries preferred using the traditional approach of escalating complaints via VDC secretaries and DDC staff.

Financial monitoring was the same as in Phase 1, though UNICEF provided additional support to DDCs during this process. | Effectiveness |

Process	Key evaluation questions	Phase 1 findings	Phase 2 findings	DAC criteria
		payment documents and involved VDCs reporting to DDCs who passed on information to DoCR and UNICEF. Delays in financial reporting were widespread and ultimately resulted in delays in Phase 2 roll-out.		
Communication	What was the communication strategy for this programme? How effective were the communication mechanisms? How did this change from Phase 1 to Phase 2?	Communication with beneficiaries was through: local radio, Nepal scouts, leaflets, and local networks. VDC staff, social mobilisers, and community members were involved in spreading information about the programme by word of mouth. Word of mouth was reported to be the most effective medium of communication, though it is likely that some of the local level informants may have themselves heard about the programme from one of these other communication media. Communication with government followed a top-down approach, from the DoCR, to DDCs, to VDCs/municipalities and wards. This was followed by a phone call between UNICEF and a DDC official, and an orientation session in each district. The communication of the centre with district governments was weak, resulting in poor understanding of the programme at the district level, and subsequently at lower levels as well.	Communication methods adopted in Phase 2 were similar to those in Phase 1, but Nepal scouts were no longer involved. In addition, SMS messages about the programme and use of cash were sent directly to phone numbers collected during the census exercise. Word of mouth was the most effective medium of communication, as in Phase 1. Communication between UNICEF and district and local officials was primarily through line ministries, as in Phase 1. UNICEF then organised an orientation and planning meeting with LDOs of all programme districts and a separate orientation session for VDC and municipality staff, to introduce the programme. The general feeling among the DDC and VDC staff was that a top-down approach was followed in implementing this phase of the programme as well, which resulted in a lack of ownership and understanding of the project.	Coordination

Process	Key evaluation questions	Phase 1 findings	Phase 2 findings	DAC criteria
	How effective was the coordination between different stakeholders involved in the ECTP, and within UNICEF? How did this change from Phase 1 to Phase 2?	Internal coordination between different teams within UNICEF entailed engagement at the central level between the Emergency and SPEA team at the design phase. The engagement with the field offices was rather limited in the design phase. Generally, there was limited understanding among district- and village-/ward-level respondents about the need for coordination, suggesting that coordination between actors was likely to be limited.	Coordination continued to be a challenge in Phase 2. This led to different VDCs/DDCs adopting different approaches to programme implementation in the phase of emerging challenges. There was room for improving the communication and coordination within the UNICEF teams involved in implementing the ECTP, in terms of how different teams at the centre coordinated their activities, and in relation to their interactions with field offices.	
Sustainability	To what extent has the intervention allowed the advancement of UNICEF's longer-term objectives around systems strengthening for social protection in Nepal?	The first phase of the ECTP delivered humanitarian assistance without creating parallel structures. It was a necessary (and successful) first step in realising UNICEF's objective around systems strengthening for social protection.	The second phase was aligned to the existing social protection payments system, which strengthened the social contract between state and citizens. Although the target group and geographical coverage of the ECTP was aligned with the recovery phase nutrition interventions, project documents do not indicate how this alignment helps with the nutrition recovery programme and how it will be monitored. The project did create political capital for the expansion of child grants in the country; however, the opportunity to link ECTP with other recovery and resilience-building efforts of the government or other humanitarian agencies was not fully utilised. A registry of under-five children has been created in 11 district, which can be a useful contribution to the GoN's efforts at creating a social registry. However, it is unclear how this will be maintained or used in the future.	Connectedness Impact

Process	Key evaluation questions	Phase 1 findings	Phase 2 findings	DAC criteria
	What can we learn from the response about the use of the social protection system for emergency response in Nepal to inform the future use of such approaches in Nepal and globally?	Key learning from this phase: - Use a simple design in the first phase that is familiar to people and easier to implement - Aligning humanitarian principles and standards with social protection system is challenging - Important not to overestimate capacity and motivation levels of implementation staff - Monitoring activities need to be carefully planned and integrated - Important to have a clear communication strategy and to ensure coordination between different actors (including internal coordination)	Key learning from this phase: - It is important to have local-level buy-in while developing a programme - Aligning humanitarian principles and standards with social protection systems is challenging - Important not to overestimate capacity and motivation levels of implementation staff - Monitoring activities need to be carefully planned and integrated - Important to have a clear communication strategy and to ensure coordination between different actors (including internal coordination)	

Annex B   Programme progress against M&E indicators

Table 10:   **Phase 1 monitoring results against the expected outcomes and outputs**

Outcomes	Indicators	Findings from M&E data	Status
1. Households are better able to meet their basic daily needs, including those of children	1.1 Transfer income is allocated to basic needs of household members; including food, household items, clothing, medicines and shelter.	1.1 Respondents largely allocated transfer income to basic necessities: 81% of the respondents utilised the ECTP to buy food, 45% reported using it to buy medicines, 37% purchased household essentials and 32% bought clothes with it.	🟩
	1.2 Transfer income is allocated to specific needs of children.	1.2 Information is not specifically collected against this indicator, however the PDM report points out that 13% of the beneficiaries reported spending some of the emergency top-up cash transfer on children's education. Approximately two-thirds of the beneficiaries live in households with at least one child (below 18 years of age) while one-third of beneficiaries live in households with at least one child below five years of age. Assuming a model of income pooling at the household level, it is likely that children benefitted from the utilisation of ECTP for food, medicine, and clothes, though it is not possible to estimate the extent of this with the data available.	🟧
	1.3 Any use of transfer income towards community needs is voluntary and is perceived as positive.	1.3 No quantitative information is available on this indicator. During qualitative interviews with beneficiaries there was no reported coerced use of the cash.	🟩
2. Households avoid harmful coping strategies and adopt positive behaviours towards children's wellbeing	2.1 Engagement in high-risk and harmful productive activities is reduced.	2.1 Given that most households utilised ECTP for meeting basic needs, such as food and medicines, it is likely that negative coping strategies such as reduced food consumption and borrowing for food were temporarily stalled. However, no information on change in high-risk and harmful productive activities after the cash transfer is available to understand the magnitude of this effect.	🟧
	2.2 Distress sale of productive assets and debt accumulation is reduced.	2.2 No information is available on this indicator.	⬛
	2.3 Households find the positive behaviours promoted by the programme useful.	2.3 The booklets on behaviour change were not distributed widely and only 7% of the respondents in the PDM survey reported receiving them. However, of those who received the booklets, approximately 95% found the information useful or somewhat useful.	🟧

3. Households are able to recover and invest in livelihoods without undue negative effects on children	3.1 Allocation of transfer income to productive assets and employment opportunities.	3.1 Although this was not a primary objective of the programme, 23% of respondents reported allocating the transfer income to productive assets and employment opportunities, including shelter maintenance (10%), repayment of loans (6%), savings (4%) and purchase of productive assets (3%).	🟧
	3.2 Children's engagement and time spent in family enterprise and domestic work does not increase as a result of productive investment of the cash transfer.	3.2 No information is available on this indicator.	⬛

Outputs	**Indicators**	**Findings from M&E data**	**Status**
1. Target beneficiaries receive cash transfers of the right amount, on time and with dignity	1.1 Take-up rate of existing social assistance beneficiaries (target: 85% of total registered beneficiaries)	1.1 The ECTP reached 434,690 individuals, i.e. 93% of registered social assistance beneficiaries.	🟩
	1.2 Timeliness of payments (target: within two weeks of final GoN approval to DDC, then within one month)	1.2 While 10 out of 19 DDCs received payments from UNICEF within two weeks of final GoN approval on 09 July the transfer to VDCs and wards was far slower. Disbursements were completed within the stipulated timeframe of six weeks in only 60% of the cases, while the remaining transfer took place after 01 October 2015.	🟥
	1.3 Transfer amount received (target: 85% of recipients receive full amount)	1.3 99% of beneficiaries sampled in the PDM reported receiving the full amount allocated to them under the ECTP, while estimates according to government administrative data show 93% coverage.	🟩
	1.4 Beneficiary knowledge of programme objectives and procedures (target: 85% of recipients are aware of correct payment amount)	1.4 More than 95% of sampled beneficiaries were found to be aware of the correct payment amount.	🟩
	1.5 Beneficiary experiences of transfer delivery (target: 70% satisfaction)	1.5 No quantitative data are available to directly assess the percentage of satisfaction. However, the NEPAN PDM survey found that 89% of beneficiaries waited less than two hours to collect the transfer and only 2.5% of the respondents reported incurring costs to receive the payment. Reported incidence of bureaucratic hassle encountered in this process was also low, at 7.8%.	🟧

		Qualitative interviews indicate that beneficiaries were generally satisfied with the transfer delivery.	🟧
	1.6 Incidents of community tension (target: none)	1.6 Less than 1% of beneficiaries reported that there were problems in the community after the distribution of cash.	🟩
2. Target beneficiaries receive behavioural change messages in a manner they can understand	2.1 Beneficiary knowledge of behavioural change messages (target: 60% of beneficiaries know two or more messages)	2.1 Only 7% of respondents confirmed receiving additional information. Of those who received additional information, more than 60% of beneficiaries were aware of two or more messages.	🟥
	2.2 Beneficiary receipt of behavioural change messages (target: 85% of total registered beneficiaries)	2.2 Only 7% of respondents reported receiving behavioural change messages.	🟥
3. Target beneficiaries are aware of and have accessed, where necessary, the grievance and redress mechanism	3.1 Incidence of contact with the grievance and redress mechanism (target: 75% of those who have a complaint had contact)	3.1 Not many complaints were made in the first phase as only 0.23% of respondents complained. Of those who complained, 100% had contact.	🟩
	3.2 Proportion of cases successfully resolved (target: 75 %)	3.2 Of the small number of complaints registered, only 57% of the cases were resolved.	🟧
	3.3 Beneficiary knowledge of the grievance and redress mechanism (target: 50% of registered beneficiaries)	3.3 93% of the beneficiaries had knowledge of the grievance and redress mechanism	🟩

Note: Based on the Phase 1 M&E Framework, the NEPAN 2015 PDM survey findings, UNICEF's Cash Transfer District Tracker and OPM's primary research. Quantitative estimates regarding beneficiaries are based on NEPAN's PDM survey. Status depicts progress against the stated indicators, summarising good progress (green), moderate progress (yellow), poor progress (red) and an absence of data (dark grey).

Table 11:   Phase 2 monitoring results against the expected outcomes and outputs

Outcomes	Indicators	Findings from M&E data	Status
1. Households are better able to meet the basic daily needs of children under five years of age.	1.1 Majority of recipients allocate majority of transfer income to basic needs of targeted children, including food, clothing and medicines (target: >50% of recipients / >50% of transfer)	1.1 54% beneficiaries who had received the transfer had spent all of the cash transfer amount at the time of the PDM survey. Of these, 58% reported spending on food, 44% reported spending on health of children, 25% reported spending on child education and 48% on clothes for children. In addition, 85% of the respondents that had received the cash at the time of the survey reported that the transfer 'somewhat' made a difference to their household living conditions, while 6% said that it made 'a lot' of difference.	🟩
	1.2 Other use of transfer income is mostly towards collective household	1.2 Expenditure on shelter and other household expenses was reported to be low in priority compared to expenditure on basic consumption by those who had spent the	🟩

	Indicators	Findings from M&E data	Status
	needs, including essential household items, shelter maintenance or livelihoods (target: <50% of remaining allocation)	cash and also those who planned to spend it soon. Only 0.7% of respondents had spent the cash amount on shelter repairs, while 2.1% reported spending cash on productive activities. An additional 22% of the respondents reported saving the amount of the transfer.	🟩
	1.3 Mothers/primary caregivers of children have knowledge of nutrition-conscious messages (target: 50% of grant recipients can recall the messages)	1.3 Only 9% of PDM respondents reported receiving SMS messages, while an additional 3% of respondents reported hearing about the SMS messages indirectly. Of these, 70.3% recalled nutrition-conscious messages. Approximately 90% of the respondents who received these messages recalled messages about child nutrition, while 24% reported messaging around maternal nutrition. Since only about 45% of all census beneficiaries provided a phone number, an estimated 24% of beneficiaries who provided a phone number received the SMS.	🟥
2. Households avoid or reduce reliance on coping strategies that are harmful to children	2.1 Poorest households reduce distress sale of productive assets and accumulation of debt to meet basic consumption (target: 20% of household)	2.1 Approximately 40% of the beneficiaries who received cash reported that they would have sold productive assets to meet basic consumption had they not received the cash grant.	🟩
	2.2 Households with a child attending Early Childhood Education are less likely to withdraw them in the short term (target: 20% of households)	2.2 Only approximately 5% of beneficiaries who received the ECTP reported that they would have withdrawn their child from Early Childhood Education had they not received the cash grant.	🟥
3. District-level government has an updated and comprehensive civil registry of children under five years of age	3.1 DDCs have collated paper records from all VDC / municipal ward offices (target: 11 DDCs)	3.1 No information available on this indicator at the time of writing this report.	⬛
	3.2 DDCs have digitised birth registration records in the MIS (target: 11 DDCs)	3.2 No information available on this indicator at the time of writing this report.	⬛

Outputs	Indicators	Findings from M&E data	Status
1. Target beneficiaries receive cash transfers and nutrition messages of	1.1 Take-up rate of children under five according to census data (target: 85% of children recorded in the census)	1.1 Not enough information available to calculate the take-up rate at the time of writing this report.	⬛

the right amount, on time and with dignity	1.2 Timeliness of payments (target: before 04 July 2016)	1.2 Around 24% of registered children had not yet received the payment during the time of fieldwork carried out by NEPAN in October 2016. Almost all the payments were made after July 2016.	■
	1.3 Transfer amount received (target: 95% of recipients receive full amount)	1.3 Of those who received payments, 100% received the full amount.	■
	1.4 Receipt of nutrition-conscious messages (target: 65% of total grant recipients)	1.4 Only 9% of PDM respondents reported receiving SMS messages, while an additional 3% of respondents reported hearing about the SMS message indirectly. Of these, 70.3% recalled nutrition-conscious messages. Since only about 45% of all census beneficiaries provided a phone number, an estimated 24% of beneficiaries who provided a phone number received the SMS.	■
	1.5 Experiences of transfer delivery (target: 70% satisfaction)	1.5 The PDM survey only gathered data on transfer delivery experience for beneficiaries who received the transfer in the first round of disbursement in each DDC, which excluded as many as 15% of eligible beneficiaries, likely to be the ones with a more dissatisfying experience. Within the group captured by the PDM survey, the transfer experience was largely satisfactory since it usually took beneficiaries half a day or less (77%), involved less than two hours of waiting time (60%), and was free from transportation costs (87%) or payments at the distribution site (98%). Our qualitative findings suggest that beneficiaries excluded from the first round of payments were largely dissatisfied due to the coverage gaps and delays.	■
	1.6 Incidents of intra-household and community tension related to the cash (target: none)	1.6 Approximately 72% respondents reported that there has been no change in the relationships within their households as a result of the ECTP, while 28% reported a decrease in household tension because of the cash grant.	■
2. Parents or guardians of eligible children are aware of and have access to programme information and grievance and redress mechanism	2.1 Knowledge of programme objectives and procedures (target: 85% of grant recipients are aware of eligibility criteria and correct payment amount)	2.1 The PDM exercise did not directly gathered data for this indicator. However, it found that of the 57% of beneficiaries who reported hearing about the programme through the radio, 77% were able to recall the eligibility criteria, and 63% correctly recalled the transfer amount. Our qualitative research also found that beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries were generally well aware of programme eligibility criteria and the correct payment amount.	■
	2.2 Incidence of contact with the	2.2 Around 34% of the beneficiaries reported that they were aware of a complaint	■

	grievance and redress mechanism (target: 50% of those who have a complaint had contact). Proportion of reported cases successfully resolved (target: 50 %)	procedure, of these 33% lodged complaints (12.5% for census and 68.6% for re-registration). About 62% respondents reported that the complaints had not been resolved.	
	2.3 Knowledge of the grievance and redress mechanism (target: 50% of registered households)	2.3 Around 34% of beneficiaries reported having knowledge of the complaint procedure (27.8% census and 54.1% re-registration).	
3. Local government offices (VDC/municipal ward) verify or provide birth registration certificates to all eligible children	3.1 All VDC/municipal ward offices have a registry of children (target: 100%)	3.1 All VDCs and municipalities were required to submit the child registry to the DDC in order to receive funds.	
	3.2 All programme beneficiary children have a birth registration certificate (target: 100%)	3.2 94% of beneficiary children were recorded as having birth registration certificates. Of these, a registration certificate was physically available for 82.4% of the children. This marks a significant increase in birth registration rates compared to the 48% registration rate prior to the programme.	

Note: Based on the Phase 2 M&E Framework, NEPAN 2016 PDM survey data, and OPM's primary research. Quantitative estimates regarding beneficiaries are based on NEPAN's PDM survey. Status depicts progress against the stated indicators, summarising good progress (green), moderate progress (yellow), poor progress (red) and an absence of data (dark grey).

Annex C   Sample research instruments

The evaluation team used a wide range of local, regional, and central level tools to carry out this evaluation, as has been detailed in the Research Methodology chapter. In this annex, we provide only three evaluation tools to illustrate the nature and kind of the questions posed by the evaluation team for the sake of brevity. Additional tools can easily be made available upon request.

C.1   Introduction and Consent: Sample text

The evaluation team was extremely careful to seek informed consent all our respondents. The introduction below highlights our approach to the evaluation, including informing respondents about the purpose of the conversation, establishing our independence from UNICEF and the government, confirming that their responses would be kept confidential and anonymised if used in the report, informing them that this was a voluntary exercise, and giving them the opportunity to both ask questions and choose not to participate, should they not wish to do so for any reason. We also sought explicit permission to record the conversation for transcription purposes.

Introduction

Hello. My name is …………. and my colleague's name is ……………. We are working for OPM, a research institute from Oxford/Kathmandu. We have come to ask you some questions about the Government of Nepal and UNICEF's post-earthquake cash transfer programme (CTP) for vulnerable groups.

We do not work for UNICEF or the government. We are an independent company who are doing an independent review of the CTP. We are trying to find out more about the programme, how it worked, and what could be done to improve it in the future.

We would like to ask your views on a range of questions. The answers that you give us will be completely confidential and will not be linked to you. We are asking these questions in different communities in _____ (*name of district*) to understand and assess how the CTP working in different localities. Your personal contributions and views will not be shared with anyone else in a way that identifies you. Therefore, nobody – in this community, in the district, at UNICEF or any other concerned organization or person working for the programme – will know what you tell us. This information is not being collected to assess your VDC or district but to understand the programme, so please feel free to share your thoughts without any reservations.

Before we begin, we would like to ask for your explicit <u>oral</u> informed consent. Please note that this interview is voluntary and you are under no obligation to answer any or all of our questions, although it would help us if you did. You are welcome to ask us any question during or after the interview. If you agree to this interview, you can still ask not to answer any question during the interview, or to terminate the interview at any time.

Could I also ask you a logistical question? Would you be ok with us recording this interview, in case we are unable to note everything down when we talk? We would then go back and transcribe the interview for missing information, but nobody else except the researchers will have access to this. *(If the researchers sense any discomfort or uncertainty from the respondents, assure them again that only you will have access to this recording, and also that you can either not record in particular places or not record at all if they are uncomfortable with it.)*

FGD with Phase 1 beneficiaries

Date of interview	
District	
Ward/VDC	
Researcher	
Note taker	
Start Time and end time	

Before we start, let's establish some rules so that our discussion is as useful as possible:

1. If everyone speaks together, then no one will hear. Let's speak one at a time, and let's not repeat what each person says, but add to it or share their experiences if they have been different.
2. Let us be polite and respectful of each other, even if we do not agree about everything.
3. We want this to be a discussion, so we do not want one person to dominate the conversation. Please allow everyone to have a say, and we hope everyone will contribute as well.
4. We mentioned confidentiality as well, so when we talk about different things here, please do not share with others who said what, even if you discuss the things we talk about here.

Do you have anything you want to ask me, or can we start?

Profile of Respondents

Number	Name	Contact Number	Gender	Consent
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				

Research questions

Introduction

1. How long have you been living in this community? Were you here at the time of the earthquake?

2. What are the different programmes operating in this village to help those affected by the earthquake? Who is responsible for these programmes? (Try to get a list of programme and perceived actors)

3. Did you benefit from any of these programmes? If yes, how? If not, why not?

4. Are you aware of the cash transfer programme being implemented by UNICEF and the government? What do you know about it?

5. Are you benefitting from this programme? Since when? (Make sure everyone is a beneficiary of the relevant phase)

(It is important for us to understand the implementation of the two different phases of the UNICEF payments. We will first focus on the first phase of the programme, when money was distributed to the five vulnerable groups, and then come back to the second phase, concerning the payments made to households with children.)

Design Phase 1

6. How did you hear about the programme?

7. What information did you receive from different sources? (Probe: from DDC, UNICEF, radio, pamphlets, text messages)

8. What do you know about how beneficiaries were selected for the first phase of the programme?

9. What do you think about the selection of these groups in the post-earthquake context? (Probe: right people targeted? Anyone missed out? Duplication of beneficiaries?)

10. What proportion of the earthquake affected population benefited from the programme in this village?

11. What did you think about the decision to distribute cash? How did this compare to distributing goods to people?

Implementation Phase 1

12. Could you please describe the process for you to receive the cash grant? (Try to map a timeline, make note of the length of each process, and approximate dates, actors and documents required in Phase 1)

13. What was your experience like with this process?

14. Did you face any challenges in collecting the transfer amount? (Probe: were there any barriers or associated costs?)

15. How was the cash used? (Probe: any difference between different social groups? Children? Relief v/s reconstruction/livelihoods?)

16. To what extent did the amount contribute towards meeting your immediate needs after the earthquake?

17. What else did you do to meet your immediate needs after the earthquake?

18. Were there any other programmes providing support in this region during this time? Of what kind and how much?

19. Did you benefit from any of these programmes?

Monitoring Phase 1

20. Did anyone come to the district to talk about the programme after the earthquake?

21. Who did they speak to? What did they ask?

22. When did this exercise take place? How many times did they visit?

23. Do you know the purpose of this exercise?

Communication Phase 1

24. What were the different ways through which you were informed about the programme?

25. Which means of communication was the most useful for you? Why?

26. Were there any problems associated with the programme's communications in your community?

27. How could communication processes be improved in the future?

28. Were there any methods through which you could register your complaints? How effective were they?

29. Were there any problems associated with this process? How could it be improved?

Sustainability Phase 1

30. What do you think about this model of using the existing cash transfer mechanism in the aftermath of a crisis?

31. How can the phase 1 programme be improved if similar events happen in the future?

32. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about Phase 1 of the programme?

(Tell the respondents that now we are going to start talking about Phase 2 of the cash transfer programme, make sure it is clear to them that we are no longer talking about the first phase)

Design Phase 2

33. How did you hear about the second phase of the programme?

34. What information did you receive from different sources? (Probe: from VDC, DDC, UNICEF, radio, text messages

35. Who were the beneficiaries in Phase 2?

36. What do you think about the selection of these groups in the post-earthquake context? How could this be improved in the future? (Probe: right people targeted? Anyone missed out? Duplication of beneficiaries?)

37. What proportion of the earthquake affected population benefited from the programme in this village?

38. What do you know about the process through which beneficiaries were selected for Phase 2 of the programme? (Probe: census exercise, listing at VDC?)

39. What information do you have about the details of this process? (Probe: starting date, duration, coverage, problems).

40. How could this selection mechanism be improved in the future?

41. Do you know why you did not receive this support during this phase?

Implementation Phase 2

42. What do you know about the process through which beneficiaries received the cash grant during Phase 2? Was it different from the Phase 1 process? In what way? (Probe: Census, registration, documents)

43. Do you know if the Phase 2 beneficiaries face any challenges in collecting the transfer amount? (Probe: were there any barriers or associated costs?)

44. How was the cash used? (Probe: any difference between different social groups? Children? Relief v/s reconstruction/livelihoods?)

45. Were there any other programmes providing support in this region during this time? Of what kind and how much?

46. Did you benefit from any of these programmes?

Communication Phase 2

47. How did you hear about the second phase of the programme? What information did you receive and through which channels?

Sustainability Phase 2

48. Do you think the model used during phase 2 could be useful in disaster response in the future? Why or why not?

49. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about phase 2?

Conclusion

50. What would be your suggestion to improve disaster response programmes in the future?

You have been very kind in answering all our questions; thank you so much. Is there anything else you would like to tell add? Do you want to ask us anything?

KII with central-level stakeholder

Date of interview	
Interviewee	
Organisation	
Position	
Start Time and end time	

Introduction

(Adapted from the Introduction above)

Organisation

1. Does your organisation play a role in social protection in Nepal, and if so what?

2. What activities did you organisation conduct in contribution to the earthquake relief and recovery efforts?

3. How were markets affected during the disaster, and how far do you feel they have recovered?

UNICEF CTP

4. Are you aware of the UNICEF CTP, and if so what do you understand of this programme?
   a. Who are the key stakeholders involved with this programme?
   b. What was the rationale for providing cash based assistance to respond to the needs of affected populations?
   c. What do you think about this rationale?
   d. What was the purpose of the cash transfer programme? Was this achieved?
   e. Who were the intended beneficiaries of the programme, and who were the recipients of the cash?
   f. What do you think about the choice of target population (in phase 1, in phase 2)?
   g. Were there any issues with targeting (caste, class, gender, geography, age, political affiliation, etc.)?
   h. How could targeting be improved in the future?
   i. Do you know the value of the CTP and how it was calculated?
   j. What do you think about the value of the CTP?
   k. Do you know how cash was disbursed to beneficiaries?
   l. Do you know of any issues with funds disbursement (delays, receipt of inexact amounts, disbursement to wrong people, thank you money/bribe)?

5. Were you involved with UNICEF's CTP, and if so how?

6. What are the key strengths and weaknesses of the programme?

7. Has the cash transfer programme met its objectives, how, why or why not?

8. How could this CTP be improved further?

9. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about this programme?

Coordination

10. What mechanism existed/exits in country for coordination on cash programming?

11. How was the UNICEF cash response coordinated with other actors implementing cash and other in-kind assistance?

12. Did the coordination mechanisms function? If so, why / if not, why not?

Monitoring mechanisms

13. Are you aware of any monitoring of the UNICEF CTP, and if so what do you know about it?

14. Does or would your organisation wish to access any monitoring data, and if so could you, and for what purpose?

GoN response to the earthquake

15. Does the government have any other programmes (beyond routine CTs) targeted to earthquake victims, and if so what are they?

16. How do these relate to the regular social protection/assistance programmes (targeting, value of support, administrative systems, implementing agencies…)?

17. How do they relate to the UNICEF CTP?

18. Are there any issues with the implementation of these GoN programmes?

19. What are the key learning to enhance preparedness for disasters in Nepal in future?

Social protection in Nepal

20. What do you think about the current social protection / assistance programmes in Nepal?

21. Do these programmes face any issues or challenges (regulation, financing, institutional, implementation capacity…)?

22. What do you think about the idea to adapt these programmes to make them more shock-responsive in the future (advantages / disadvantages / challenges in terms of financing and sustainability, institutional capacity etc.)?

23. What role, if any, will your organisation play or seek to play in the future development of social protection in Nepal (TA, funding…)?

General

24. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about any of the above?

25. Is there anything you would like to ask us?

KII with UNICEF

Date of interview	
District	
Researcher and Note taker	
Start Time and end time	

Introduction

(Adapted from above)

Profile of Respondent

Full name	
Contact Number	
Gender	
Consent	

Research questions

Introduction

1. How long have you been in your current position? Where were you before this?

2. Can you give an overview of UNICEF's broader emergency response and recovery activities in the district after the earthquake? (Probe: which standards/commitments guide the programmes?)

3. What is your role with UNICEF's emergency operations in this district?

4. What are your role within the UNICEF cash transfer programme?

(It is important for us to understand the implementation of the two different phases of the UNICEF payments. We will first focus on the first phase of the programme, when money was distributed to the five vulnerable groups, and then come back to the second phase, concerning the payments made to households with children.)

Design Phase 1

5. Were you involved with the design of the programme? To what extent?

6. What do you think about the decision to distribute cash to the beneficiaries?

7. Do you know how the amount of the transfer was calculated?

8. Who were the beneficiaries for the first phase of the programme?

9. In your opinion, what proportion of the earthquake affected population benefited from the programme in this district during the first phase?

Implementation Phase 1

10. What was the role of this office in implementing the first phase of the cash transfer?

11. What was the process for cash to flow from UNICEF to the beneficiaries? (Map a timeline, make note of the length of each process, and approximate dates, actors and documents required in Phase 1, challenges)

12. What was this process like in practice? What worked well and what were the key challenges encountered?

13. How did this process vary across different VDCs within this district? (Note: add to timeline)

14. What did beneficiaries need to do to be able to collect the transfer amount?

Monitoring Phase 1

15. How was the first phase of the programme monitored and by whom? (Probe: UNICEF, NEPAN, government? Anyone else?)

16. What was the process for the monitoring activities? (Probe: trainings, frequency, duration, coverage, findings)

17. What information was collected during this exercise and from whom? How was this used? (Probe: any changes made? Which ones? Why or why not?)

18. What was the grievance mechanism for beneficiaries during the first phase? How did this work? (Probe: was this used?)

19. Do you know how the cash was used by beneficiaries? (Probe: any difference between different social groups? Children? Relief v/s reconstruction/livelihoods)

20. What is your opinion on the extent to which the amount contribute towards meeting the immediate needs of beneficiaries after the earthquake?

21. What are the key learnings from the monitoring activities carried out during phase 1?

Communication Phase 1

22. How was information about the programme communicated to the beneficiaries?

23. Who else was involved in the communication processes? (Probe: DDC, VDC, etc.)

24. Which communication methods were the most effective in your opinion, and why?

25. What were the learnings from communications during phase 1?

Coordination Phase 1

26. Which teams were involved with the emergency cash transfer programme within UNICEF? (Probe: centre and district, different teams)

27. What were the internal coordination mechanisms within UNICEF for the emergency response activities after the earthquake?

28. What worked well and what were the learnings?

29. What were other (non-UNICEF) emergency response activities taking place in this district? (probe: government, other agencies)

30. How did UNICEF coordinate its emergency response and recovery activities with these actors in this district?

31. What was this process like? What worked well and what are the key learnings?

Sustainability Phase 1

32. What are your opinions about the choice of using the existing social protection system in the aftermath of a crisis? (Probe: beneficiaries and cash delivery mechanism, working with government)

33. What are the learnings that can inform the design of a similar programme in the future?

34. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about Phase 1 of the programme?

(Tell the respondent that now we are going to start talking about Phase 2 of the cash transfer programme, make sure it is clear to them that we are no longer talking about the first phase)

Design Phase 2

35. Were you involved with the design or planning of the second phase of the CTP? In what capacity?

36. Did your responsibilities change during Phase 2 of the programme? In what way?

37. Who were the beneficiaries for the second phase of the programme?

38. In your opinion, what proportion of the earthquake affected population benefited from the programme in this district during the second phase?

39. What was the process for beneficiary identification and selection during phase 2? (Probe: how was census done, what happened to the data, who used it, how?)

40. How long did the census take in this district? When did it start and finish?

41. How comprehensive was the census? How were the gaps in the data addressed?

Implementation Phase 2

42. What was the role of this office in implementing the second phase of the cash transfer? How did it change from Phase 1?

43. Was the team provided any additional support to implement the additional activities under this phase of the programme?

44. Was there any change in the process for cash to flow from UNICEF to the beneficiaries? (Map a timeline, make note of the length of each process, and approximate dates, actors and documents required in Phase 2, challenges)

45. What was this process like in practice? What worked well and what were the key challenges encountered?

46. How did this process vary across different VDCs within this district? (Note: add to timeline)

47. What did beneficiaries need to do to be able to collect the transfer amount?

Monitoring Phase 2

48. What were the changes to the programme monitoring in the second phase? (Probe: UNICEF, NEPAN, government? Anyone else?)

49. What was the process for the monitoring activities? (Probe: trainings, frequency, duration, coverage, findings)

50. What information was collected during this exercise and from whom? How was this used? (Probe: any changes made? Which ones? Why or why not?)

51. What was the grievance mechanism for beneficiaries during the second phase? How did this work? (Probe: was this used?)

52. Do you know how the cash was used by beneficiaries? (Probe: any difference between different social groups? Children? Relief v/s reconstruction/livelihoods)

53. What is your opinion on the extent to which the amount contribute towards meeting the recovery needs of beneficiaries in a post-earthquake environment?

54. What are the key learnings from the monitoring activities carried out during phase 2?

Communication Phase 2

55. How was information about the second phase of the programme communicated to the beneficiaries?

56. Who else was involved in the communication processes? (Probe: DDC, VDC, etc.)

57. Which communication methods were the most effective in your opinion, and why?

58. What were the learnings from communications during phase 2?

Coordination Phase 2

59. Have there been any changes to the teams within UNICEF that are involved with the emergency cash transfer programme in the second phase? (Probe: centre and district, different teams)

60. What were the internal coordination mechanisms within UNICEF for the disaster response activities during this period?

61. What are the key learnings from this process?

62. What are other (non-UNICEF) recovery activities taking place in this district? (probe: government, other agencies)

63. How does UNICEF coordinate its recovery activities with these actors in this district?

64. What was this process like? What worked well and what are the key learnings?

Sustainability Phase 2

65. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about phase 2?

66. Do you think the model used during phase 2 could be useful in disaster response in the future? Why or why not?

67. What preparedness activities are required to make the existing social protection system within the country more shock responsive?

Conclusion

68. In your opinion, how does this programme align with the UNICEF commitments in humanitarian action? (Probe: CCC, time taken…)

You have been very kind in answering all our questions; thank you so much. Is there anything else you would like to tell add? Do you want to ask us anything?

Annex D   Field mission schedule

Schedule of interviews: district and local levels

Day -1: Sept 26

Preparation: Call hotel and find a place to stay. Preferably near DDC.
For Sindhupalchowk and Gorkha, call to check if you can schedule meetings with UNICEF and NEPAN, and maybe even some other stakeholders from day 1. Go through the tools and practice them.

Day 0: Sept 27

Preparation: Meet at 7 30 am at the office. Familiarise yourself with the tools. Practice along the way.

Carry out meetings if you arrive at the district centre early. Check with focal people in DDC to confirm meetings for next day. Plan for next day's living arrangements. Print letter from UNICEF, which will be emailed.

Day 1: Sept 28

Time	Activity	Location	Notes
	LDO		
	District Disaster Risk Committee		
	Cash distribution focal person		
	Finance officer		
	UNICEF field officer		

Preparation: Get phase 1 and phase 2 beneficiary lists (and the list of people registered after the census as well). Sample from phase 1 and try to arrange an FGD the next afternoon. Confirm sleeping arrangements for next day. Travel to VDC if possible. Confirm meetings for next day. Get list of VDC secretaries and their numbers to schedule VDC secretary FDG on day 5 as well.

Day 2: Sept 29

Time	Activity	Location	Notes
	VDC/ward secretary or municipality CEO		
	NEPAN representative		
	FGD Phase 1 bens		

Preparation: Finalise phase 2 FGD for next day based on phase 2 list AND those phase 2 beneficiaries missed out by the census. Confirm meetings for next day.

Day 3: Sep 30

Time	Activity	Location	Notes

	FGD Phase 2 bens		
	Community mobiliser		
	FGD non-bens		

Preparation: Identify community leader and confirm next day's meeting. Follow up on any other meetings that need to be conducted the next day. There is time to do other things on the next day, or to move some things to day 4. Make arrangements to stay in the district headquarter the next day.

Day 4: Oct 1

Time	Activity	Location	Notes
	Community leader		

Preparation: Confirm meetings for the next day, especially VDC secretary FGD. Arrange additional meetings in the district if needed. This is a good day for review and debrief, and more district level discussions.

Day 5: Oct 2

Time	Activity	Location	Notes
	VDC secretary FGD		
	Any remaining interviews?		
	Travel back to KTM		

Annex E   Evaluation Terms of Reference

Individual / Institutional contract details:

Evaluation of the Nepal Emergency Cash Transfer Programme through Social Assistance, May 2015 to April 2016

Background:

On 25 April and 12 May 2015, two powerful earthquakes of magnitude 7.8 and 7.3 on the Richter scale struck the central part of Nepal. They were followed by as many as 395 aftershocks of magnitude 4.0 or more. The total damage and financial losses have been estimated as US$ 7.05 billion, equivalent to 36 per cent of the country's GDP as of 2014.

Since day one, UNICEF has worked closely with the Government of Nepal and other international and local partners on a large-scale emergency response operation including actions for immediate relief and early recovery. As part of this assistance, UNICEF Social Policy and Economic Analysis (SPEA) section has supported the government to provide relief and recovery cash transfers to beneficiaries of the existing social assistance programmes for vulnerable groups, and for children under five years who were not part of the existing schemes. The programme provides an opportunity to strengthen and progressively scale up the Child Grant, reinforce the building blocks of an integrated social protection system, and develop a model for social transfers in Nepal that works in both regular development and emergency contexts.

In the first phase of the response, UNICEF provided technical and financial assistance to the government to deliver a relief payment of NRs. 3,000 (US$ 30) as a top-up to the regular social assistance payments received by five vulnerable groups[1] in the 19 districts[2] most affected by the earthquakes. In the second phase of the response, UNICEF is supporting the government to create a new registry of children under five in the 11 most affected districts[3] and to provide two recovery payments of NRs 3,000 (US$30) each to approximately 250,000 children. The two rounds of recovery payments are expected to be made in February and May 2016. The total budget for phases one and two of the programme is approximately US$25 million.

The cash transfer programme is implemented jointly by the government through the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD), UNICEF, and other local partners. The cash payments are delivered through the government system. Funds are transferred from UNICEF to the District Development Fund, and the District office then transfers funds to the Village Development Committee (VDC) or Municipality. In most cases payments to beneficiaries are made cash-in-hand from the VDC office, but by bank transfer in some Municipalities. Additional measures have been put into place to strengthen the dissemination of programme information to beneficiaries and for monitoring and evaluation. This includes engagement of local organisations for outreach, use of local FM radio, an SMS based monitoring system, and systematic post-distribution monitoring.

While substantial documentation has been taking place including post-distribution monitoring and internal analysis and reviews of systems and processes, UNICEF is seeking a qualified institution to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the entire programme.

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[1] Dalit children under five years of age, Widows, and single women over 60 years of age, People with disabilities, Senior citizens over
70 years of age or over 60 if Dalit, Highly marginalised *Janajati* ethnic groups.

[2] Sindhupalchowk, Nuwakot, Dhading, Gorkha, Rasuwa, Kavhrepalanchowk, Dolakha, Sindhuli, Ramechhap, Makawanpur and Okhaldhunga. Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, Lalitpur, Solukhumbu, Lamjung, Kotang, Chitwan and Tanahun.

[3] Sindhupalchowk, Nuwakot, Dhading, Gorkha, Rasuwa, Kavhrepalanchowk, Dolakha, Sindhuli, Ramechhap, Makawanpur and Okhaldhunga.

UNICEF Outcome/Output Relevance:

The Emergency Cash Transfer Programme through Social Assistance contributes towards the Nepal Country Programme IR 5.8: Emergency Earthquake Response, S3: Restoration of Households livelihood and resilience through integrated approach that balances immediate needs and long term development path.

The Evaluation will help to meet UNICEF's Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (2.2 Rapid Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation) and will provide evidence and learning towards UNICEF's global strategy for Integrated Social Protection Systems.

Purpose:

At the national level, the purpose of the evaluation is to: (i) strengthen the on-going earthquake recovery programme, specifically through the use of cash transfers through the government social security system; (ii) to provide accountability to our partners, donors and beneficiaries; and (iii) to contribute directly towards the second and third programme objectives as specified in the original "Road to Recovery" proposal:

1. Help develop a model for social transfers that works both in regular development and emergency contexts

2. Help strengthen the social protection system for children in the country by phasing in a reliable and predictable form of income support for the medium term beyond the emergency period

To this end the primary audience includes UNICEF Management and Programme staff; policy makers and implementing officers within the Ministry of Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD), Ministry of Finance (MoF) and the National Planning Commission (NPC); Development Partners involved in social protection systems strengthening (World Bank, ADB, ILO, DFID, GIZ etc.); and UNICEF NatComs.

At the UNICEF global level, the evaluation will contribute towards knowledge and learning for a corporate model of emergency cash transfers through social protection and the effectiveness of cash transfers in humanitarian contexts (as recommended in the 2015 UNICEF report: *Cash transfer as a social protection intervention: Evidence from UNICEF evaluations 2010-2014*), and will be of interest to Policy Division (Social Protection Section), EMOPS and other programmes where cash transfers are appropriate means to achieve sectoral objectives.

In light of the recommendations in the recent High-level Panel Report on Cash Transfers in Emergencies ("Doing Cash Differently", ODI, 2015) and other current research projects on Shock-Responsive Social Protection (e.g. ODI and OPM both funded by DFID; the World Bank), the evaluation will also contribute to knowledge and learning internationally about the use of social protection systems as a tool for delivery of emergency cash assistance.

Objectives:

The objective is to conduct a comprehensive programme-specific evaluation focused on the short-term relief and recovery cash transfer interventions while capturing key linkages to the longer term strategy. Due to the on-going nature of the programme, the evaluation can be considered as a mid-term evaluation with both summative and formative aspects. Specifically, the programme phases to be evaluated include:

1. Phase 1 - Emergency top-up cash transfer to five vulnerable groups through social assistance in 19 districts, May-Dec 2015;

2. Phase 2 - At least the first (of two) recovery cash transfer payments to all children under five years in 11 districts including the related census exercise and Birth and Programme Registration, Dec-Jun 2016; and

3. Phase 3 - How phase 1 and 2 interventions and other related activities have contributed towards, and can further support, the longer-term objectives of the cash transfer programme including expansion of the Child Grant and systems strengthening.

The evaluation will be primarily process-focused and consider programme design, partnerships, coordination, delivery, information, feedback loops and the monitoring system. The evaluation will be guided and informed by the original programme proposal ("Road to Recovery", Rabi et al. May 2015), the programme specific monitoring and evaluation plan, framework and theory of change (UNICEF SPEA Section, July 2015), and other relevant documents. The evaluation is not expected to assess the attributable impact of the intervention on the lives of beneficiaries (impact assessment), but can draw on other available and primary data to assess outcomes.

Relevant partners and other key stakeholders include programme beneficiaries, local and district level government officials, national government (MoFALD Department of Civil Registration, MoF, NPC), other local partners (NEPAN, Scouts Association, PHD Group, Civil Society Group for Child Sensitive Social Protection), Development Partners (World Bank, WFP, UNDP, DFID) and other humanitarian actors especially those involved in the Cash Coordination Group (CCG) (e.g. UNOCHA, ICRC, various NGOs).

The evaluation is expected to take place over a period of 4 months starting in March 2015 – following the first round of phase 2 cash payments to children under five years.

Scope and Evaluation Questions:

The evaluation will cover phases 1, 2 and (to some extent) 3 of the cash transfer programme covering up to 19 intervention districts (depending on the phase) and the time period from May 2015 to April 2016.

The 11 districts to be covered (on a sample basis) for phase 1 and 2 are: Sindhupalchowk, Nuwakot, Dhading, Gorkha, Rasuwa, Kavhrepalanchowk, Dolakha, Sindhuli, Ramechhap, Makawanpur and Okhaldhunga. Additionally for phase 1, the 8 districts covered include: Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, Lalitpur, Solukhumbu, Lamjung, Kotang, Chitwan and Tanahun.

For phase 1, the evaluation should cover all five categories of vulnerable groups registered under the social assistance programmes including: (i) Dalit children under five years of age; (ii) Widows, and single women over 60 years of age; (iii) People with disabilities; (iv) Senior citizens over 70 years of age or over 60 if Dalit; and (v) Highly marginalised *Janajati* ethnic groups. However the evaluation should put emphasis on children who benefited from the intervention either directly (as a beneficiary of the child grant or disability grant) or indirectly, as a household member of other beneficiaries. Where feasible, all data should be disaggregated by age, gender and the main ethnic / caste groups in Nepal.

The overarching evaluation questions are:
1. How successful has design and delivery of the emergency cash transfer programme been in relation to the short-term relief and recovery needs of the target group, and in relation to the wider humanitarian response?

2. What can we learn from the response about the use and delivery processes of social protection programmes for emergency response in Nepal to inform the future use of such approaches in Nepal and globally?

3. To what extent has the intervention allowed the advancement of UNICEF's longer-term objectives around systems strengthening for social protection in Nepal?

More specifically, and following the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria for evaluations, the evaluation should consider the following criteria and integrate analysis of differences among different social groups (gender, age and caste / ethnicity):

Relevance of the design and approach, considering:
➢ Was the choice to use cash rather than in-kind assistance justified in terms of needs (among different social/gender groups), availability of markets and beneficiary and government preferences?
➢ To what extent did beneficiary selection / criteria complement the targeting of other humanitarian assistance? Were there any significant gaps for particular social groups?
➢ Was the size and regularity of the transfer adequate and to what extent were the different needs of the beneficiary population met within the objectives of the programme?

Efficiency of the delivery mechanism, considering:

➢ How efficient were delivery processes, considering the time and resources required at each stage of implementation, and coordination between different actors?
➢ How timely was the response in relation to needs of different social groups, and comparatively with other cash and in-kind assistance in the wider humanitarian response? How could timeliness have been improved?
➢ How cost-effective was the response compared to other modalities and what potential is there for efficiency savings at all stages?
➢ How efficient was access to the programme in terms of potential private / opportunity costs from the beneficiary perspective, and considering different social groups?

Effectiveness of the approach and implementation modalities, including:

➢ How effective were the delivery processes for the cash payments and complementary booklets from both implementers and beneficiaries' perspective, and considering areas using manual delivery and using bank transfer?
➢ How effective was the process of information dissemination to beneficiaries through multiple mechanisms in terms of coverage and beneficiary knowledge?
➢ How well did the targeting mechanism function, what were the (potential) inclusion and exclusion errors (by design and through implementation), and what tensions were caused, if any?
➢ How well did the real-time and systematic monitoring mechanisms and feed-back loops function, including the government grievance and redress mechanisms? Were any particular groups excluded?

Outcomes of the programme for beneficiaries and their communities, including consumption patterns, food security, livelihoods and living conditions. Specific outcomes of interest include:

➢ To what extent and how was the cash transfer used for consumption of under-fives and other children in the household, comparatively with adults, considering food (quantity, quality, diversity), clothing, medicine, other goods including education?
➢ How has the cash transfer supported household livelihoods, considering purchase of livestock and other productive assets?
➢ To what extent have beneficiary households reported changes in coping strategies, considering common food security indicators, gifts and loans, sale of productive assets?

Note: it is not expected to identify statistically significant attributable impact. Inferences can be made based on post-distribution monitoring data and careful selection of FGDs and KIIs.

Sustainability in terms of the response itself and progress in policy reform and systems strengthening, considering:

➢ What progress has been made in laying the foundation for achieving the longer-term objectives of the original proposal ("Road to Recovery") in terms of activities undertaken and concrete outcomes (see programme objectives 1 and 2 under "Purpose")?
➢ Was the choice to go through the existing government social protection system justified compared to alternatives?
➢ Has the choice of implementation modality, and linking to longer-term objectives required any trade-offs with humanitarian objectives?
In addition, the evaluation should assess the extent and quality of **coordination** and alignment with the wider response, considering complementarity with the other major programmes, involvement in the OCHA Cash Coordination Group and alignment with Post-Disaster Needs Assessment etc.

Evaluability:

A theory of change and monitoring framework has been developed for the first phase of the response, for which many of the indicators are relevant for phase two. It is expected that the evaluation can address all indicators within the framework up to the level of short-term outcomes. However, given the lack of baseline data, the universal nature of the social assistance programmes, and the significant amount of other relief interventions active within the same communities, a statistically robust assessment of attributable impact is not considered feasible at this stage.

The Evaluation will rely on secondary quantitative data from two main sources: (i) the government social assistance beneficiary data including registration lists and payment records (mostly paper based) and (ii) two rounds of UNICEF's post distribution monitoring data which includes a sample of 880 beneficiaries from 11 districts, representative at the VDC level. For phase 1 it is possible to assess coverage in terms of those who received payments from the existing beneficiary lists; however, it may not be possible to robustly assess coverage in terms of the wider eligible (but not necessarily registered) population. Other existing research and secondary data may be used for this purpose.

The Evaluation is expected to supplement this data with qualitative primary data collection including key informant interviews with all relevant stakeholders as identified above and focus groups with selected beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries from the same communities. There may be certain areas that are inaccessible due to their remoteness, and certain key government officials and other individuals may not be available due to the length of time passed since the first phase of the programme.

Approach and methods:

Overall approach

The evaluation will employ a mixed methods approach drawing on key programme documents including the original proposal and the monitoring and evaluation framework for guidance. The evaluation should be situated within current debates about the use of social protection programmes in emergency response; and should consider throughout, issues of gender and equity.

Given the timing of the evaluation and its strategic value globally, it will take both an evaluative and formative approach – identifying and assessing the processes and outcomes of the response to date, linking the activities to longer term goals, and bringing together the lessons from the experience to inform future use of emergency cash transfers through social protection.

The evaluation will draw on the following methods:

- Desk review of programme documents and other relevant data
- Review and analysis of secondary quantitative data
- Key Information Interviews
- Focus Group Discussions
- Triangulation

The data collected should be disaggregated by sex, age, socioeconomic status, female-headed households, ethnicity and ability, etc. where relevant and focus on both the implementers (including local authorities, service providers and implementing partners) as well as the affected populations themselves.

Sampling

Sampling for Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions should be done in consultation with UNICEF and government partners. A purposively selected sample of Districts and Municipalities / Village Development Committees should be taken, considering a balance between relevant factors: urban / rural, level of damage, geographic region, remoteness, ethnicities, socioeconomic indicators, etc.

Data availability

Baseline data will be a significant challenge. The National Emergency Operation Centre (NEOC) at the Ministry of Home Affairs have provided regularly updated disaggregated information, e.g. on affected population, the number of deaths, level of destruction and loss. Another source of baseline data would be the rapid assessments conducted by government line ministries and partners in certain sectors during the initial stages of the response efforts, although the reliability, the information relevant to UNICEF on key indicators and disaggregated data is limited. Nepal Food Security Monitoring System (NeKSAP)[4] rapid assessment include baseline data on relevant indicators, including access to water sources, sanitation and access to health care. Moreover, there are indicators, targets and output data available through UNICEF's Humanitarian Performance Monitoring (HPM) in the Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) appeal for Nepal.[5] Additionally, information on (cluster and) UNICEF activities, partners, locations of implementation and timelines are available in the 3w/4w section of humanitarianresponse.info. A Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) was conducted led by the National Planning Commission ensuring sector to sector comparability and homogeneity in the definition of basic concepts of damages, losses and post-disaster recovery needs, while building on the initial rapid sector damage assessments undertaken by central and local governments and the clusters established by the government with support from development partners.[6] Additionally, secondary data sources such as NMICS 2014, 2011 census, NLSS 2010/11 and NDHS 2011 can be used.

Other secondary quantitative data specific to the programme will be available from the following sources:

- Two rounds of post-distribution monitoring (PDM) conducted by the Nepal Participatory Action Network (NEPAN) on behalf of UNICEF. For the first phase of the response the PDM included a household survey sampling 880 eligible individuals from the government registry in 11 districts and is representative at the VDC level. It covers all five categories of vulnerable group and includes a household roster and modules on: (i) effects of the earthquake on assets, livelihoods, food-security and other coping strategies; (ii) access to and implementation of the programme; (iv) utilization of the cash transfer and perceptions of beneficiaries. The second round of PDM is yet to be conducted

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[4] Nepal Food Security Monitoring System (NeKSAP), *Nepal Earthquake 2015, Key Findings and Maps*, 8 May 2015, Release 3, Kathmandu: WFP, 2015.

[5] http://www.unicef.org/appeals/nepal.html

[6] National Planning Commission, *Nepal Earthquake 2015: A Post Disaster Needs Assessment, Vol. A Key Findings*, Kathmandu: Government of Nepal, 2015.

but will focus on the recovery cash transfer to under-fives in 11 districts.

- Government completion reports: at the district level these provide district level data by social assistance category on registration and receipt of the cash transfer, and financial liquidation. VDC registration and distribution lists will be available at the local level.

Other relevant programme documentation will be made available including the M&E plan and framework, management information tools, implementation guidelines, reports on financial flows and the SMS based monitoring.

Deliverables:

➢ Inception meeting with UNICEF and government counterparts
➢ Evaluation work plan and report outline – the report structure is to be agreed and finalized during the inception phase.
➢ Emerging findings workshop, internal to UNICEF NCO to assess issues arising and provide practical support for any evaluation challenges
➢ Draft evaluation report
➢ Stakeholders workshop for input and validation of the draft report include wide range of stakeholders
➢ Final evaluation report, including Executive Summary
➢ A short external document for an international audience highlighting learning from programme

Tentative timeline

Activity Duration

Activity	Duration
Advertise TOR	-
Deadline for application	3 weeks
Contract start date	8 weeks
Inception and planning phase	2 weeks
Piloting, data collection and initial analysis	6 weeks
Emerging findings workshop	-
Draft report and stakeholder workshop	4 weeks
Final reports	4 weeks

Management and Coordination:

Oversight

Nepal Country Office will manage the evaluation. The Evaluation Manager from Nepal Country Office will provide day-to-day management and facilitation of the evaluation process in-country, including day-today oversight of the evaluation team, with technical assistance from PME and SPEA sections.

Management

The evaluation team will be answerable to the Evaluation Manager. The team will decide its own fieldwork programme in consultation with the Evaluation Manager and relevant Country Office staff and stakeholders. It will inform the Evaluation Manager of any problems arising. The team will also immediately inform the Evaluation Manager of any issues regarding the integrity or effectiveness of UNICEF's response encountered during the evaluation research.

Quality assurance

A Reference Group of immediate stakeholders at the country level including one external expert will be established to ensure quality assurance. The Reference Group will include the SPEA Cash Transfer Specialist and PME Section Chief from UNICEF, one Under-Secretary from the Department of Civil Registration (DoCR), one Local Development Officer, and one member of the Cash Coordination Group.

The Reference Group will assess the quality of key evaluation products, including methodology and evaluation instruments, inception and final reports. A ToR outlining the roles and responsibilities of the Reference Group will be developed separately. All evaluation products will also be submitted for external quality review.

Participation

The evaluation is not intended to be participatory from the perspective of the beneficiaries. Key implementing partners, in particular the Government of Nepal, will be involved throughout the process.

Other UNICEF partners will be kept informed of the evaluation progress on a regular basis. They will be invited to the workshops and consulted on the evaluation outputs.

Ethical Considerations

- The evaluator/team should adhere to UN and UNICEF ethical and evaluation norms and standards:

- United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Standards for Evaluation in the UN System, 2005

- United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms for Evaluation in the UN System, 2005 (including impartiality, independence, quality, transparency, consultative process)

- Ethical Guidelines for UN Evaluations and the UNICEF procedure for ethical standards in research, evaluation, data collection and analysis7 will guide the overall process.

- UNICEF adapted evaluation report standards

- The evaluation should incorporate the human rights-based and gender perspective and be based on Results Based Management principles and logical framework analysis.

 Considering the vulnerability of the affected population, ethical considerations are of the utmost importance. Apart from usual considerations, e.g. on harms and benefits, informed consent and payment and compensation, considerations specific to the post-earthquake situation will need to be anticipated. This may include potential anger and assessment fatigue of the affected population, vulnerable groups, including children as well as in dealing with sensitive indicators on GBV, trafficking, etc. The evaluators will need to outline any ethical considerations in the inception report.

Profile of Evaluator/Evaluation Team

The evaluation team should comprise a gender balanced team of at least three researchers and technical experts with expertise in quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection, and with the following specific qualifications:

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[7] UNICEF procedure for ethical standards in research, evaluation, data collection and analysis, 1 April 2015, CF/PD/DRP/2015-001, available from UNICEF

A Social Protection Specialist (Team Leader)

- At least a Master's degree in economics, social policy, international development or other relevant social science; and at least 10 years of documented experience in research and evaluation of social protection Programmes in developing countries;

- Extensive experience in working with, UN, national and local authorities, INGOs and local NGOs, beneficiaries

- Knowledge of the use of social protection systems in emergency contexts; and of the social protection system in Nepal, if possible

An Emergency Cash Transfer Specialist

- At least a Master's degree in international development, economics or other social sciences; and at least 8 years of documented experience in research and evaluation of cash transfer projects, preferably with a link to nutrition.

- Excellent knowledge of the humanitarian system, including the cluster system

- Extensive experience in working with, UN, local authorities, INGOs and local NGOs, beneficiaries

A national consultant with a Master's degree in social sciences or other relevant field with at least 8 years of experience in leading data collection through participatory methods and techniques to promote consultations with affected populations.