

Accountability in social pension programmes: A baseline mapping of the Old Age Grant in South Africa



Executive Summary

In the last decade, social protection has grown in importance as a tool for tackling poverty and inequality and ensuring that growth is inclusive. Whilst there are a variety of approaches to social protection, social pensions¹ for older people have emerged as a key instrument. More than twenty low and middle income countries have introduced social pensions in the last ten years². Social pensions have demonstrated positive impacts on older people's income, health, dignity and wellbeing, as well as broader impacts on their households and wider community.

The growth in social protection programmes has naturally led to a focus on developing methods of implementation to ensure that programmes are effective and accountable. This is essential not only for reducing fraud, error and corruption, but more importantly to ensure citizen participation in decision making on issues that will impact their lives. This principle applies to any social protection programme, but accountability mechanisms for social pension programmes additionally need to consider particular physiological, social and economic changes that can come with older age.

This report presents the findings of an exploratory study of accountability mechanisms in South Africa's Old Age Grant (OAG) which took place in October 2013. The purpose of the study was to explore the types of grievances and identify the key actors in making programmes and systems more accountable, and their roles and responsibilities. The study highlights examples of good practice and challenges for achieving accountability in social pension programmes and also draws on examples of practice from Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda.

Key findings

Accountability in social pension programmes is not limited to a narrow, technical focus on operational issues in terms of reducing error, fraud and corruption, and improving programme efficiency. Accountability goes beyond a specific cash transfer programme and can address fundamental, long-term change to programmes and policies through political engagement.

The design of a social pension programme influences how older people engage with accountability mechanisms. Social pension recipients are more likely to experience a sense of entitlement with categorical schemes based on age, and in turn feel empowered to use accountability channels. In targeted programmes where eligibility criteria are unclear and older people see the grant as a "gift", older people can be reluctant to raise grievances through fear of having their grant stopped.

The design of accountability mechanisms must take into consideration specific physiological changes associated with older age. This includes deteriorating sight and hearing, decline in memory and slower processing of information. Physiological ageing can affect accuracy of perception and ability to hear certain sounds, which is sometimes misinterpreted as older people being "confused" or "not understanding" information. Sensitising frontline staff and those involved in designing accountability mechanisms on these issues is an important step.

The design of accountability mechanisms should also consider psychosocial adjustments associated with older age including lessening of power and influence,

¹ Defined as non-contributory cash transfers paid to older people

² HelpAge International, Social Pensions Database <http://www.pension-watch.net/about-social-pensions/about-social-pensions/social-pensions-database/> Accessed 17th March 2014

and withdrawal from economic and social networks. This may be particularly exacerbated in old age if an individual has already experienced a lifetime of marginalisation for example on the basis of gender, ethnicity, or race.

The combination of physiological and psychosocial changes in older age, and lack of entitlement can worsen power imbalances between service users and service providers. The changing nature of interactions between demand and supply side actors when social pension programmes are undergoing reform or introducing new payment systems adds a further layer of complexity. One of the main issues is that programme staff will have less direct contact with grant recipients as the accountability chain lengthens, and processes are more individualised as groups of OAG recipients no longer gather on payment days.

In light of these challenges, creating safe spaces for older people to informally discuss issues amongst peers, and electing representatives to take these issues forward in forums with stakeholders responsible for delivering social pensions, offer positive examples of accountability mechanisms. A particular added value is that they also provide an opportunity to inform older people about their rights which can strengthen their interactions with service providers, as well as update about changes to delivery systems or provide information on how to use new technologies. This Older People's Association (OPA) model already exists in the four study countries to varying degrees but they face challenges including in expansion and resourcing, and how to include marginalised older people.

The purpose of an OPA is not to replace existing accountability mechanisms related to programme operation (such as telephone helplines or walk in facilities) but to complement them. The potential of the OPA, and Older Citizen's Monitoring (OCM) to serve as citizen-led accountability mechanisms in social pensions, is already being recognised by a number of countries with moves to integrate the OPA/OCM in to broader management information systems (MIS). Whilst this is positive because it leads to increased recognition and credibility, and potentially increased resources for the groups, there are a number of reoccurring challenges. Chiefly whether the integration of OPA/OCM into MIS will compromise the independence of these groups and their capacity to challenge programme delivery or broader policy issues. Secondly, the practical demands of managing electronic data systems, particularly when localised data is still paper based.

Across the four study countries there are positive examples of accountability mechanisms which have recognised and adapted to older citizens. However little is known about their effectiveness, and how they could be improved. A recent systematic review investigating the role of community accountability mechanisms in service delivery in Africa similarly highlighted an "urgent need for studies to evaluate the impact of interventions on older people and people with disabilities... There is a major gap in the evidence for interventions aimed at strengthening community accountability and inclusive service delivery for these groups"³. Understanding what works, and in particular what is appropriate and accessible is particularly important and timely as accountability mechanisms for social pension programmes are developed and expanded in a number of countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

³ Lynch et al (2013) What is the evidence that the establishment or use of community accountability mechanisms and processes improves inclusive service delivery by governments, donors and NGOs to communities? Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London

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Introduction

Accountability is a term traditionally associated with political science and financial accounting. During the last 10 to 15 years, its use has become more common in areas such as business ethics, good governance, international development, democratisation, citizenship and civil society. Accountability is the concept that, “individuals, agencies and organisations (public, private and civil society) are held responsible for executing their powers according to a certain standard (whether set mutually or not). More broadly, it refers to the process of holding actors responsible for their actions”⁴.

In a given context standards may already be set out, for example in the constitution, legislative frameworks or policies. A range of accountability mechanisms may exist through which actors can be held responsible, such as human rights commissions and ombudsmen, or government-led initiatives to include citizens in consultative and democratic processes. Civil society-led initiatives such as citizen monitoring and advocacy, budget analysis or working with the media are also examples of accountability mechanisms. Whether standards are adequate, and the extent and effectiveness of the accountability mechanisms, is of course context specific and contested.

Accountability is clearly a broad concept, and the associated standards and mechanisms are wide-ranging. This report is focused specifically on accountability mechanisms in relation to social pensions⁵. This is set against a background of broader debate on accountability in social protection, a growing area of discussion at international and national levels⁶, in which accountability is increasingly appearing as a “second wave” of technical debate in social protection after targeting and payment issues. Accountability in social protection also links to wider discourse related to governance, transparency and accountability which are seen as central to achieving development goals as well as contributing to the promotion and protection of human rights⁷.

Rationale

In collaboration with its network partners, HelpAge International is currently implementing a four-year multi country programme (known as the AFFORD programme) in Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda, with financial support from Irish Aid. One of the expected outcomes of this programme is for social protection programmes in the four countries to be more accessible to older men and women. Inadequate access can result from problems in existing schemes such as exclusion errors, lack of information about the programme, fraud or corruption. It can also relate more fundamentally to the approach to social protection, such as coherence with other policy sectors, or poverty-targeted versus universal approaches. Accountability mechanisms offer channels through which these issues can be exposed and negotiated.

⁴ McGee and Gaventa (2010) *Synthesis report: Review of Impact and Effectiveness of Transparency and Accountability Initiatives*. Institute of Development Studies

⁵ Non-contributory cash transfers paid to older people

⁶ Accountability in social protection is emphasised in ILO Recommendation 202 on National Floors of Social Protection (2012), EU Communiqué on Social Protection (2012) and is a growing programmatic interest area of bi-laterals – Irish Aid, DFID and the Dutch MFA are some examples. See also the World Bank on ‘social accountability’ http://www.worldbank.org/socialaccountability_sourcebook/

⁷ See for example OHCHR and CESR (2013) *Who will be accountable? Human rights and the post-2015 development agenda*.

Across HelpAge's portfolio of work there are already many approaches and tools that can be regarded as accountability mechanisms. For example, through the AFFORD programme, older citizen groups are monitoring social protection programmes and using the evidence in advocacy with local government officials, as well as engaging in a wider range of advocacy initiatives with policymakers and other key stakeholders. These approaches can help to highlight and reduce error, fraud and corruption within social protection programmes; but more importantly they help older people to understand their rights and entitlements and to open a space for state-citizen dialogue.

Whilst HelpAge is not new to this area of work⁸, there is a need to develop a better understanding of what is meant by "accountability mechanisms" in relation to social pensions, as well as improve the documentation and evaluation of existing accountability mechanisms. This is particularly important when debates around accountability are happening within a complex and fast changing environment. This baseline mapping is intended to provide a starting point for sharing knowledge, approaches and ideas, and improving capacity and coordination on this issue, both between the AFFORD programme countries and more widely across HelpAge. In addition, it will act as a catalyst for policy dialogue at national, regional and international levels, in terms of what elements are necessary to achieve accountable and responsive social pension programmes.

South Africa has been selected as a case study country for this baseline mapping because it represents a relatively mature social pension in a lower middle-income country context with strong administration and discourse around rights, entitlements and accountability. As such it provides a useful entry point for understanding accountability mechanisms, not as a perfect blueprint for other countries, but more to provide a "menu" of options and key issues to consider in the development of accountability mechanisms elsewhere.

Methodology

The report provides a baseline mapping of the accountability mechanisms associated with the Old Age Grant in South Africa and an overview of existing mechanisms in Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda. The broad questions explored in this study were the following:

- What are the main types of issues which prevent older people from accessing their entitlements?
- Who are the key actors and what are their roles and responsibilities in making the social pension programme more accountable?
- Are there any examples which can be considered promising practice?
- What are the main challenges for achieving accountability in social pension programmes?

In South Africa, semi-structured interviews were held with key stakeholders from government and civil society, and Old Age Grant recipients. This included representatives of the Department of Social Development, the South Africa Social Security Agency (SASSA), South Africa ageing network, South Africa older people's forum, organisations supporting older people including Age in Action, Muthande Society for the Aged, older people's day centres and social workers. Organisations

⁸ HelpAge's first Older Citizen Monitoring programme was initiated in 2000. Paralegal centres have been in operation since around 2006.

involved in broad-based monitoring and advocacy (both community and policy monitoring), including Black Sash and Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute (SPII) were also consulted. Meetings were held in Kwazulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, Pretoria and Johannesburg. A desk-based review and interviews with Programme Managers from Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda were also carried out to provide a summary of the existing accountability mechanisms in those countries.

Whilst the report highlights some promising practice and challenges related to accountability in social pension programmes, it is not intended to provide a comprehensive assessment of which mechanisms are most effective. An in depth analysis is neither within the scope or the methodology of this mapping.

The report begins with a brief introduction to the South Africa Old Age Grant and the nature of grievances associated with the OAG. It then describes the accountability mechanisms using a visual diagram and accompanying narrative by way of the frameworks, policies and standards for accountability, and the mechanisms for individual and collective grievances, differentiating between government-initiated and civil society-initiated approaches. Finally, areas for consideration are outlined including promising practice and challenges.

South Africa Old Age Grant

Social pensions have been a feature of South Africa's social policies since 1928, however until 1993 the grants programme was racially biased. Initially only available as a programme for Whites and Coloureds, it was extended to Blacks in 1944, with benefit levels less than one tenth of those of Whites, a stricter means test, and payment systems differentiated along racial lines⁹. The 1992 Social Assistance Act, which came in to force in 1996, officially removed racial discrimination and resulted in a huge increase in grant recipients.

The Social Assistance Act 2004 replaced the 1992 Social Assistance Act. It consolidated legislation of social assistance, codified the right to the Old Age Grant and centralised the administration of social assistance through the creation of the South Africa Social Security Agency (SASSA)¹⁰. SASSA became operational in 2006, and reports to the Department of Social Development who is responsible for developing social security policy. SASSA is not only responsible for administering the Old Age Grant, but all of the social assistance grants including Child Support, Disability and Foster Care Grants.

The OAG is available to South African citizens or permanent residents, and recognised refugees living in South Africa aged 60 years and above, who satisfy the means test¹¹. By October 2013, nearly 3 million older people were in receipt of the Old Age Grant¹², approximately 70% of older people¹³, with the monthly transfer

⁹ Brockerhoff, S (2013) A Review of the Development of Social Security Policy in South Africa: Monitoring the Progressive Realisation of Socio Economic Rights. SPII Working Paper 6

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ <http://www.services.gov.za/services/content/Home/ServicesForPeople/Socialbenefits/oldagegrant/> Accessed 19th November 2013

¹² In October 2013, 2,924,511 older people were in receipt of the OAG. Statistical Report on Social Grants, SASSA, Report no.10 of 2013, 31 October 2013

¹³ Figure based on number of OAG recipients as a proportion of the population 60 years and above taken from Mid Year population estimates 2013, Statistics South Africa, Statistical Release P0302. Note that permanent residents and recognized refugees living in South Africa are not included in this figure.

amount set at 1,260 Rand for the 2013/14 financial year¹⁴. Universalization of the OAG is planned to start from 2016 for all older people aged 75 years and above.

Prior to the creation of SASSA, administration of the social pension was decentralised to provincial level, which resulted in differentiation in performance, cash transfer amounts, delivery systems as well as corruption and fraud. Under this system, cash was manually delivered to grant recipients at paypoints on a set day. Since 2012, SASSA, via third party service provider Cash Paymaster Services (CPS), has begun to introduce a new automated payment model with biometric magstripe cards. The purpose of the new system is to minimise corruption and fraud and reduce grant administration costs. New OAG recipients have been automatically enrolled on to the new system, whilst existing OAG recipients are required to re-register.

The delivery of the OAG is now largely dictated by what facilities are available in a given area. In urban areas, where the coverage of ATMs is more adequate, the OAG is largely paid directly in to a recipient's bank account enabling them to withdraw the cash from an ATM when they chose to, and in several smaller amounts if preferred to withdrawing the full month amount in one go. Whilst in peri-urban areas, the grant may be accessed via merchants (such as shopkeepers) who receive a commission from the bank for using the cash flow from their business activities to pay recipients. In rural areas, the OAG may still be distributed at temporary paypoints on a set date, similar to the manual system. The difference is that it uses the biometric magstripe cards, and point of sale (POS) devices are set up inside local community facilities on a set date.

This overview has provided a brief background to the historical emergence of South Africa's Old Age Grant and administrative systems. Of particular note is the relative recentness of the Social Assistance Act 2004 and the subsequent operationalisation of SASSA in 2006, both taking place within the last decade, whilst the new automated payment model only began in 2012. Whilst the history of the grant is old, it can be seen that the new administration system and governing legislation are still fairly young.

Types of grievances related to the Old Age Grant

This section provides a summary of the grievances which were commonly reported by key stakeholders in relation to the operation of the Old Age Grant. As the focus of the study is on the accountability mechanisms, rather than the actual grievances, the intention of this section is to provide context for the baseline mapping, rather than an in depth analysis of the grievances. In general there are two types of complaints that people can make about a programme: appeals against programme decisions relating to eligibility for enrolment and complaints about the programme delivery.

As highlighted in the previous section, there are a variety of ways in which older people access their OAG due to the new payment system being in various stages of roll out and limited by available infrastructure. This means that the commonly reported grievances can be roughly grouped around those related to the older forms of payment (e.g. temporary paypoints on a specific date) and those related to the newer forms of payment (via merchants and ATMs).

¹⁴ 2013 Budget

Grievances related to the older system are similar to those commonly reported about social pensions in other countries which are delivered using the manual system. These include long queues at the paypoints, sometimes without water or toilet access, and inadequate organisation at the paypoint. Obtaining identity cards for older people who do not have proof of citizenship or age can also be a lengthy process due to a perceived lack of coherence between different government departments.

Long distances to travel to the paypoint and the prohibitive cost of transport were also concerns. Regarding the pay date, a mobile phone service is meant to communicate this to older people, and occasionally has failed to do so. It was also reported that a number of problems can effect the mobile service including failing to show up on a specified date, running out of money, or a network failure meaning the POS device will not work. In these cases older people may have to wait another month before they can receive their grant.

The newer payment system has been able to address a number of these grievances, at least for older people located in urban or peri-urban areas. At the same time it has introduced a number of new grievances. For example, there were reports of merchants pressuring older people to purchase from their shop before they will release their grant, as well as shops running out of money.

By far the most common grievance reported about the new automated payment system was in relation to unauthorised deductions for funeral schemes and micro-loans, as well as direct marketing of airtime to grant recipients. The company responsible for providing the Social Grant Distribution technology, CPS, is a subsidiary company of Net One, a company which offers micro-finance products and mobile phone services. This is a clear conflict of interest concerning a for-profit company financially benefiting from the delivery of public goods and services. It also creates a complicated accountability relationship as there are more obstacles in the way in between the government and older people.

This issue concerns not only the broader moral issue of marketing products to grant recipients, but also the training and management of CPS staff, as sometimes it is the paypoint stage at which older people are involuntarily signed up for funeral schemes. Whilst grant recipients are meant to receive a paper receipt which shows the amount of grant they should receive, including any deductions, it was reported that sometimes these receipts are retained by the agent and used to sign up the recipient to a funeral scheme without their permission. This stems partly from a lack of regulation of the agents and high levels of staff turnover of CPS agents, but also that older people may lack information on the role and responsibilities of the paypoint officials. CPS also contracts third party service providers which can exacerbate the problem, as the chain of accountability from SASSA to the eventual agent is lengthened even more.

Whilst SASSA has conducted information sessions for older people during the process of re-registration, it was viewed that older people need on-going training or advice on how to use the new payment system. In some cases information on the programme had not been translated in to all the official languages, and radio information for non-literate groups was lacking. Improving basic awareness of older people on their entitlements, and that their ID documents and PIN numbers belong to them and should not be given to others, were also seen as important elements for on-going advice and support. This is especially true when individual older people collect their payments via ATM or merchant, as the support that could previously be found when groups of older people met on a specific pay date no longer exists.

Further, it was viewed that some older people may not be confident enough to say if their grant payment is less than they expected, for fear that their grant may be cut. This reflects an underlying power imbalance between the OAG officials in a position of authority and the grant recipients. In this case information sessions about the grant focused on general administration may not be enough, but actually raising awareness amongst older people about their rights and entitlements is necessary.

When grievances are related to the private sphere, the State has the primary responsibility for regulating third party service providers, such as CPS. Slightly more complicated is the issue of "family grievances" which are also related to the private sphere, but the role of the State is less clear. For example, if an older person authorises a family member to collect the grant on their behalf, but that person withholds the cash, then this constitutes a family grievance. In this scenario social workers may be best placed to intervene, which in the South African case has a fairly comprehensive network and are part subsidised by government.

For a balanced perspective, it is important to point out that misuse of the OAG are not just reported in relation to grant officials, but occasionally about grant recipients. Anecdotal evidence reports grant recipients using their SASSA card as collateral to obtain a loan from moneylenders and then telling SASSA that they have lost their card, as well as the family of a grant recipient failing to report when an older person had passed away.

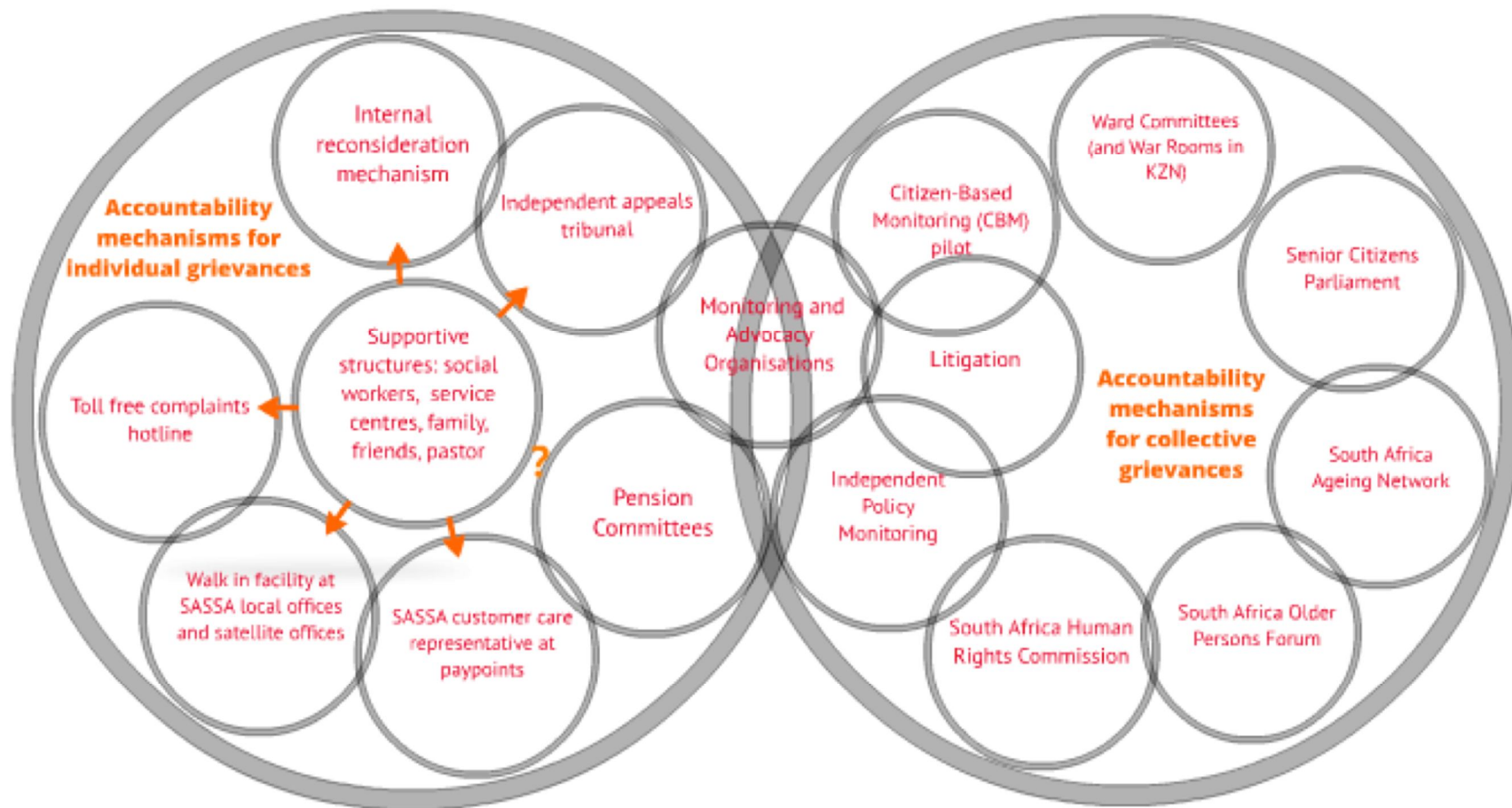
Unrelated to the actual payment system, another common grievance is about the means test. This relates largely to the means test being based on a couple rather than individual, whereupon if one spouse has an income from any source (private pension, investments, salary, etc.) this is taken in to account for the other spouse and affects their eligibility for the OAG. This way of carrying out the means test assumes a model of a family unit with a 'male breadwinner' rather than treating individuals in their own right. This is particularly problematic as the idea of a 'traditional' family unit is increasingly changing in the context of migration and HIV. However the design of the OAG, including eligibility criteria and universalization, are currently under review by the DSD.

This overview of grievances commonly reported by the stakeholders interviewed for this baseline mapping provides some illustrative examples, but data on the extent and pattern of these grievances is less accessible partly because the ones related to the automated payment system are relatively new. Many of these grievances are already well known by SASSA and are starting to be addressed. It also illustrates the pros and cons of both the manual system and the new automated system.

Accountability mechanisms related to the Old Age Grant

This section describes the accountability mechanisms related to the Old Age Grant, which is based on information from the stakeholder interviews. Whilst it is intended to be as comprehensive as possible, the complexity of the accountability mechanisms means that omissions are likely. The accountability mechanisms are described with a visual diagram (Figure 1) and accompanying narrative outlining the frameworks, policies and standards against which the government can be held to account and the mechanisms for individual and collective grievances.

Fig.1 Mapping of accountability mechanisms



Accountability mechanisms in South Africa function on two levels. One focuses narrowly on technical, operational issues related to the Old Age Grant in terms of reducing error, fraud and corruption, and improving programme efficiency. The other is broader and political; it seeks to address policy, legislation or wider programmatic issues related to the Old Age Grant. The narrower, operational level can be viewed as addressing shorter-term issues, whilst the broader approach may involve longer-term objectives. Both levels are important, and in practice, the two levels should inform each other. Whilst it is useful to distinguish these two levels, the reality is of course more complex and disordered.

The accountability mechanisms are separated into mechanisms for individual grievances and mechanisms for collective grievances (Figure 1). Accountability mechanisms for individual grievances refer to the channels an individual older person may use to seek redress for grievances related to the OAG, such as those outlined in Section 5. Accountability mechanisms for collective grievances are mechanisms by which groups of older people or other interested parties can take forward a number of grievances about the same issue. They avoid individuals having to fight injustice alone, which is especially important if they feel vulnerable, and can be very effective in opening dialogue with duty bearers. These channels can be used to address the narrow operational issues as well as broader policy and legislation.

In administrative terms, South Africa is divided into nine provinces (Annex One), which are divided into metropolitan¹⁵ and district municipalities. The district municipalities are further divided into local municipalities, followed by Wards (Annex Two). As of May 2011 there were 4277 Wards in South Africa¹⁶.

Frameworks, policies and standards for accountability

South Africa has a number of frameworks, policies and standards against which the state and public institutions can be held to account. These are related to the operational side of the Old Age Grant, and include the Social Assistance Act 2004 (which provides the redress mechanism) and the Department of Social Development Customer Service Charter. The charter sets out the principles and standards of service delivery in terms of a customer's rights and what is expected from the DSD (see Figures 2 and 3).

Beyond the operational side of the OAG, a number of laws and policies set out the broader principles and standards in relation to social security/social protection in older age. The highest law in the country, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa includes in the Bill of Rights the 'right to have access to social security, including, if they are unable to support themselves and their dependents, appropriate social assistance'. The Social Assistance Act 2004 sets out the types of social assistance (including the Old Age Grant), eligibility criteria, and regulation of the administration of social assistance¹⁷. The Older Person's Act 2006 and the Older Person's Charter further outline a number of principles which form the basis for accountable practices including: the participation of older people in decision making processes at all levels; access to information; and as far as practicable, services and facilities that are accessible to older people¹⁸.

¹⁵ Eight of South Africa's largest cities are governed as metropolitan municipalities

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Administrative_divisions_of_South_Africa Accessed 10th December 2013

¹⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Administrative_divisions_of_South_Africa Accessed 10th December 2013

¹⁷ Social Assistance Act 2004, South African Legal Information Institute http://www.saflii.org/za/legis/consol_act/saa2004174/ Accessed 17th March 2014

¹⁸ Older Persons Act 2006, South Africa Older Persons Forum

http://www.saopf.org.za/sites/default/files/your_rights/Older%20Persons%20Act%20-%20Act%2013%20of%202006.pdf Accessed 17th March 2014

Figure 2: Customer’s rights as set out in the Customer Care Charter

You have the right to...

- Apply for the services we provide.
- Services that promote your rights and wellbeing.
- Insist on respect and confidentiality – of your privacy and information.
- Receive protection when you report any form of abuse, misuse, fraud or misconduct.
- Be served in the language of your choice.
- Be informed about clear procedures on reporting abuse, misuse, fraud or misconduct.
- Speak up about circumstances you find unusual.
- Insist that wrong or unfair practices be corrected.
- Take part in fair processes. This includes meeting with officials and being accompanied by someone of your choosing.
- See your personal information.
- Be treated with dignity in adequate conditions.
- Have access to fair and unbiased assistance.
- Expect friendly and helpful service from respectful, responsible and competent officials.
- Ask for a full and fair investigation of every complaint.
- Demand proper feedback on the outcome of investigations.
- Call on a review of the decision, if you disagree with it.
- Expect that you will not be inconvenienced by administrative slipups.

Figure 3: Responsibilities of DSD as set out in the Customer Care Charter

We will help you by...

- Offering you services that meet the required standards
- Identifying ourselves when we speak to you.
- Listening carefully to you, and refer you appropriately should we not understand your language.
- Providing accurate and consistent information.
- Explaining the things you need to know and do, such as
 - o the types of services we offer;
 - o how to qualify for these services; and
 - o how, when and where to apply.
- Providing you with, or referring you in writing to other services, you may need.
- Providing written feedback about approved or ejected applications.
- Providing reasons for our decisions.
- Informing you about procedures to appeal our decisions.
- Keeping to the timelines we have set for each type of service.
- Correcting our mistakes.
- A zero tolerance policy on abuse, misuse, fraud or misconduct.
- Taking care of customers with special needs such as the disabled or elderly.

These documents provide valuable tools for setting out the rights of citizens (service users) and responsibilities of duty bearers (service providers). However they are only useful if both rights holders and duty bearers are aware of them and understand what they mean in practice. On a practical level this means ensuring that information and training is provided in appropriate languages and formats. On a more fundamental level, rights holders must be empowered to exercise their rights. This presents particular challenges in a context where the majority of older people will have suffered a lifetime of marginalisation and discrimination. Gaining a sense of entitlement or empowerment will not happen overnight nor on the basis of a well written Act or charter, but requires practical steps for raising awareness and empowering rights holders.

Mechanisms for individual grievances

Accountability mechanisms for individual grievances refer to the channels an individual older person may use to seek redress for any grievances related to the OAG, such as those outlined in Section 5. In terms of what mechanisms already exist, these are largely formal government mechanisms which have been established for all the SASSA grants. They are also reinforced by the provision of information about the programme including stakeholder engagement meetings/information sessions, posters, leaflets and radio shows initiated by SASSA. These materials are supposed to be translated in to all the official languages of South Africa with radio broadcasts providing information for non-literate groups. As shown by the grievances raised in Section 5 this may not always be the case.

With regards to a rejected application, individual older people may lodge an appeal through the **Internal Reconsideration Mechanism**; this is done by SASSA and is more an administrative check to ensure that the application and eligibility criteria were applied correctly. The most common mistake is made with the calculation of the means test; if this has occurred the decision on the application would be changed. If the original rejection remains unchanged, the applicant is advised that he/she has the right to appeal to the Minister of Social Development through the **Independent Appeals Tribunal**. The appeals tribunal consists of independent experts who adjudicate the application and have powers to uphold or change the original decision. If a decision is still unfavourable to the applicant, the applicant can go on judicial review. These mechanisms provide for all types of social grants, and in reality the majority of appeals relate to the disability grant.

There are also a number of government mechanisms set up for individuals to lodge grievances. In locations where the payment system is not yet fully automated, **SASSA Customer Care Representatives** are present at the paypoints. These representatives act as a focal point for grant recipients to raise any grievances and find out more information about how they can resolve any problem, for example a lost card or unauthorised deductions from the monthly pension amount. These grievances are recorded and used to assist in training staff where procedures are not being followed and feed into the Government's internal performance monitoring systems.

In locations where the payment system is fully automated and grant recipients may not have any direct contact with SASSA officials at paypoints, they can use the **Walk In Facility** at SASSA local and satellite offices. Older people based in areas where the automated payment system is not fully operational may also have to visit these Walk In Facilities, as the Customer Care Representative may be unable to directly resolve issues. These offices tend to be based in towns, usually in the same building as the government social workers (see below), which also report to the Department for Social Development. This means that an older person who needs to resolve a grievance will have to travel to the office, and if they are unable to be seen on that day due to the offices being busy, will have to return again the next day. This is a challenge both in terms of cost of transport and the travel required for a less physically able older person.

As a first point for information, SASSA also operates a **Toll-free Hotline**. This provides advice on what steps to take for resolving a grievance, rather than actually being able to resolve it directly. The nature of the grievance will also determine at what office or administrative level it needs to be resolved. Interview respondents pointed out that the hotline is unlikely to be used by older people themselves, but may be used by social workers or others supporting older people. This was viewed to be due to the automated telephone menu being confusing as well as the cost of making the calls. Whilst the hotline is free to call from a landline, it is not free to call from a mobile phone, and many people only use a mobile phone. This limitation to the hotline is already being addressed by SASSA.

Across all of these formal government accountability mechanisms attached to the Old Age Grant, it is important to highlight that when older people access these mechanisms, they are unlikely to be accessing them on their own. This is due to the fact that many of these mechanisms are lengthy, bureaucratic and formal procedures and orientated towards literate groups. Some stakeholders referred to mobility being a barrier to older people using the

mechanisms, whilst others suggested that older people may not understand the information and would accept what they had been told by an official due to power imbalances between the grant officials and grant recipients. Older people were perceived to more easily conform to their situation and would be less likely to complain. Surprisingly few stakeholders referred to specific age-related problems such as loss of sight, hearing, slower processing of information, etc as presenting a particular barrier for older people.

This means that older people are reliant on other supportive structures in order to access these formal mechanisms. In the South Africa context there are a number of existing supportive structures that can assist. **Social Workers** including the Department of Social Development's generalist social workers as well as Age In Action's national network of social workers specifically for older people, play an important role in supporting older people to access the formal grievance mechanisms. Age in Action's social workers provide support to the older people's service centres (see below) and carry out home visits, and are therefore fairly well spread. They are also part-funded by Government and well connected to the DSD and SASSA local offices. Whilst the DSD generalist social workers are more numerous, older people do tend to become "lost" within their systems. At the same time, the specialist social workers for older people are more limited in reach, having only two social workers per district and currently unable to carry out case work due to lack of resources.

Another supportive structure that assists older people to access the formal accountability mechanisms is through the older persons **Service Centres** or **Luncheon Clubs** as provided for in Chapter 3 of the Older Persons Act 2006. These facilities are varied in size and scope, some provide lunch and companionship, others provide a broader range of services such as education and skills training for income generation, promotion of health lifestyles, transport, spiritual and cultural activities.

Regardless of their size all service centres are registered according to the Older Persons Act 2006 and are partly funded from Government resources. Civil Society Organisations such as Age in Action or Muthande, provide training to the service centres in governance, such as setting up rotating committees, managing finances, etc. Other funds are raised through charging membership fees (between 10-30 Rand per month) and applying for private donations or other types of grants.

These centres and clubs play a key role in supporting older people to access the formal grievance mechanisms by offering a hub in which older people can meet to discuss problems, and which is visited by social workers connected to SASSA and DSD. Coordinators of the service centres are usually better-educated older people and are able to provide advice and help other older people on what to do about grievances they may have with the OAG. However, it was not clear whether the service centres held regular consultative meetings where older people could discuss and record the grievances collectively (e.g. through citizen monitoring), or whether this was just done on an ad hoc and individual basis. Representatives of some service centre committees also attend meetings of the South Africa Older Person's Forum (see Section 6.4) where they can anonymously discuss collective grievances based on the individual issues. However the cases where service centres are represented on the SAOPF are exceptions rather than the norm.

Whilst they offer many benefits, the centres and clubs face challenges in terms of funding and capacity. Some of the smaller clubs experience delays in receiving government funding and may not be able to function for a couple of months, in the meantime losing members and having to start again once funding becomes available. There are also limitations in terms of skills and capacity of the service centre members, meaning that there is little rotation of committee members.

Another supportive structure for older people to access the formal accountability mechanisms is via **Monitoring and Advocacy Organisations**. These civil society organisations, such as Black Sash and Social Change Assistance Trust (SCAT), carry out monitoring of government services including the Old Age Grant (see Section 6.4). In the process of carrying out the monitoring, volunteers directly interview grant recipients about the service received at the paypoint and the grant itself, and are able to directly assist individuals to access the

accountability mechanisms for individual grievances. At the same time the data is used for advocacy via the accountability mechanisms for collective grievances (see Section 6.4).

Black Sash also operates a National Helpline providing free paralegal advice and information and referral on issues including the OAG. People seeking advice may call at the normal cost of a landline telephone call or send a free SMS to request to be called back. The helpline can also be contacted by email. Like the SASSA Hotline, the Helpline may also be more commonly used by those supporting older people, rather than older people themselves. Black Sash also delivers community workshops to raise awareness amongst grant recipients about their rights and entitlements, thereby supplementing the information provided by SASSA.

Family, friends or a **local pastor** may also provide support for accessing the grievance mechanisms, but unlike the social workers, service centres or monitoring and advocacy CBOs, they may not have the same knowledge of the mechanisms, nor the access to SASSA or DSD.

These supportive structures are an example of promising practice in relation to accountability mechanisms. Whilst the government mechanisms are clearly comprehensive, they are very formal, bureaucratic processes for older people who may have had little contact with such systems, and who may not be literate. It is difficult to imagine how effective the formal accountability mechanisms would be if it were not for the supportive structures. Put another way, if the supportive structures did not exist, it is questionable whether such formal mechanisms would have been designed to begin with.

Mechanisms for collective grievances

Accountability mechanisms for collective grievances are mechanisms by which groups of older people or other interested parties can take forward a number of grievances about the same issue with the relevant duty bearer. Accountability mechanisms for collective grievances avoid individuals having to address an issue alone and can provide anonymity, which is especially important if they feel vulnerable, and can be very effective in getting duty bearers to enter into discussion. As also highlighted in Section 6.3 there is a natural overlap between mechanisms for individual grievances and mechanisms for collective grievances, which cannot be neatly separated. However, unlike accountability mechanisms for individual grievances, those for collective grievances can be used to address the narrow operational issues as well as broader policy and legislation.

Monitoring and Advocacy Organisations, such as Black Sash and SCAT, are an important civil society initiated accountability mechanism for collective grievances. Black Sash initially started as an advice service providing casework and paralegal advice for individuals, but over time it evolved to build a network of Community Advice offices and Community Based Organisations (CBOs) in order to broaden their reach and impact. As well as supporting CBOs to provide advice, Black Sash also provides training for CBOs in local government legislation, plans and budgets, including how to monitor and hold local government to account and how to participate in community decision making structures.

A main area of activity for Monitoring and Advocacy Organisations has been the monitoring of SASSA paypoints¹⁹. In collaboration with SCAT, Black Sash worked with more than 270 CBOs nationwide to collect monitoring information and use it in local level advocacy²⁰. CBOs developed positive working relationships with local SASSA offices to carry out the monitoring, and monitors were deliberately very visible so as to be transparent and non-threatening.

Volunteers from the CBOs monitored standards and access to information as well as gathering basic information about how the grant is used. An important point is that both grant recipients

¹⁹ These organisations also monitor other services such as medical clinics and other grants, but the focus of this baseline mapping is on the OAG. For more information, including monitoring reports and tools, visit: <http://blacksash.org.za/index.php/sash-in-action/community-monitoring-and-advocacy-programme> Accessed 29th November 2013

²⁰ The main monitoring project (CMAP) took place between 2010 and 2012.

and officials delivering the grant were interviewed with questionnaires. This enabled issues in delivery to be observed from the perspective of both the duty bearer and rights holder, and highlighted the need to build knowledge of standards, regulations and rights on both sides. Data from the monitoring was discussed by CBOs in meetings with local government and compared with data from municipal reports.

A very comprehensive independent evaluation of Black Sash/SCAT's monitoring and advocacy project provides a valuable source of learning and good practice²¹. One key consideration for future monitoring approaches relates to the gradual transition of Grant delivery to an automated payment system meaning that monitoring becomes more challenging due to grant recipients no longer visiting paypoints on a set date, and the delivery of grants moving in to the private sphere.

During the last year, the Department of Performance, Monitoring and Evaluation in the Presidency (DPME) has initiated a 'Framework for Strengthening Citizen-Government Partnerships for Monitoring Frontline Service Delivery'²², which will involve a **Citizen-Based Monitoring (CBM) Pilot**. This Government initiated accountability mechanism represents an effort to include citizens' experience of service delivery into their overall monitoring, evaluation and performance frameworks. CBM is not meant to duplicate or replace existing structures or processes, but to consolidate and strengthen existing practices in monitoring and public participation. Pension Committees (see below) and the above-mentioned CMAP project have been outlined as possible approaches for a pilot CBM planned to run in 10 communities until March 2015 with a selected number of service delivery departments including SASSA. In developing the Framework, DPME drew on experience of civil society led monitoring and advocacy including the previously mentioned CMAP project. Whilst the CBM is government initiated, the monitoring is carried out by civil society.

Once the pilot is underway it will be a useful exercise to compare the original civil society initiated CMAP or other monitoring structures, with the government initiated CBM in terms of approaches and scope of the monitoring. Due to the orientation of the DPME, there is a risk that the CBM may focus only on operational service delivery and performance issues, rather than wider issues to do with policy, legislation or coherence between sectors. In this case the CBM should not be considered a replacement for civil-society initiated monitoring and advocacy, but more like a complement.

Pension Committees are informal community groups that started to form at the grant paypoints (i.e. those which still operate a manual system or at least set up the POS devices on a set date). They are comprised of older people and other community leaders and provide support to SASSA with "queue management" and providing information on grievances. On the whole their role appears to be fairly informal, ad hoc, inconsistent across paypoints and with little information about rights and entitlements.

However, it was viewed that the Pension Committees represented a real opportunity for playing a key role in monitoring and advocacy of the OAG as they are closer to the community and provide a more legitimate representation of OAG recipients. At the same time it highlights the social element of the paypoints, whereupon older people have an opportunity to meet together and talk about any problems with the OAG or other issues and to find solutions. If the Pension Committees can become organised they can provide an important role for formally monitoring and reporting grievances and linking the community level with the Older People's Forums and providing information to SASSA.

The role of Pension Committees needs to be considered in light of the new automated payment system that is reducing the frequency that groups of older people gather together on a specific pay date. This may mean that other ways of bringing older people together have to be sought. It was not clear the extent to which Pension Committees and the Service Centres were linked,

²¹ http://blacksash.org.za/images/case_report_oct2012.pdf Accessed 29th November 2013

²² <http://www.thepresidency-dpme.gov.za/dpmewebsite/Page.aspx?Id=148> Accessed 12th November 2013

but it presents an opportunity for bringing the two together for semi-formalising the monitoring and advocacy. One risk is that the Pension Committees were viewed to be very susceptible to elite capture, and in these cases their integrity could be comprised. These kinds of issues would have to be managed carefully.

The next cluster of accountability mechanisms for collective grievances are three government-initiated mechanisms, namely the **South Africa Older Person's Forum (SAOPF)**, the **Older Person's Desk** and the **Senior Citizen's Parliament**. The establishment of the **SAOPF** was convened by the Department for Social Development and the South Africa Human Rights Commission. Its purpose is to give older people a platform and united voice, and provide a space for consultation and dialogue between older people, government and other stakeholders. The SAOPF, in collaboration with older people, was instrumental in drafting the Older Persons' Charter.

The SAOPF is established as a legal entity and currently has a representative functional platform at national level which is funded by the Department of Social Development. In theory it should have representation at all administrative levels in order to consult and feed information down and up the forum levels. An elected representative from each committee should be nominated to represent the OPF at the next level up, reaching up to national level. This has started as a somewhat top down process and currently not all Provincial OPF are actually functional due to lack of resources. The main functioning ones are currently those in Kwazulu Natal, Limpopo and Free State, whilst only some Districts have OPF.

The DSD has a mandate from the President to set up OPF in all Wards, presenting a somewhat formidable task with 4,277 Wards²³ in South Africa. It seems timely and relevant to explore whether the Pension Committees and Service Centres could provide an existing structure for building the Ward level OPF, considering that in some cases, representatives of the Service Centres already attend the OPF.

An example from a District level OPF based in Mpumalanga Province gives an idea of how the OPF functions at that level and provides an accountability mechanism for the OAG. The OPF holds quarterly meetings that include representatives of the Service Centres and other stakeholders including NGOs, business people and individual Forum members. Government stakeholders are invited to attend the meeting depending on what issues are on the agenda, and may include attendance by a SASSA District Manager or Department of Home Affairs if the issue relates to identity cards for example. These meetings can be used to raise collective grievances, which are formally documented including actions which the SASSA representative or other stakeholders have committed to follow up. This provides a transparent mechanism for holding all stakeholders present at the meeting to certain commitments.

At Ward level the number of OPF would be too numerous for SASSA representatives to join all those meetings, so it would be very important to ensure that the Ward OPF are legitimately governed and the Ward OPF issues are effectively represented at District level and so forth up to National level OPF. Already there are challenges with information not transmitting up or down the levels of the OPF.

As already highlighted, the full functioning of the OPF is challenged by lack of resources. The Chair of each Provincial OPF is currently a volunteer who is carrying out this role in addition to their everyday commitments. Coordination of the OPF is partly carried out by social workers in addition to their usual commitments. For the OPF to function effectively it would be preferable to have a full time paid Coordinator to work side by side with the Chair.

A final point also highlighted in relation to the Pension Committees, concerns the capacity and representation of older people on the OPF. It was viewed that the older people with the greatest capacity to run the OPF, namely those who are educated, retired professionals, may have little interest due to it being of less relevance to their daily lives. Furthermore, many

²³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Administrative_divisions_of_South_Africa Accessed 10th December 2013

older people may be less able to attend the OPF due to having a lot of responsibilities including informal work and grandchildren to take care of. Ensuring that OPF are representative of older people in their Wards and other levels will be an essential element of its overall success.

In Kwazulu Natal province, progress has been made in linking Older Persons Representatives from the Ward level to more general community structures including **Ward Committees** and **War Rooms**. This approach forms part of KZN province's 'Operation Sukuma Sakhe' which is based on a 'whole of Government approach' which encourages the integration of communities with the delivery of government services. A mechanism through which this has been operationalized is through 'War Rooms'. These provide a space for discussing issues between multiple stakeholders including Older Persons Representatives/Focal Persons, community development workers, social workers, department officials from SASSA and DSD and private sector. The War Rooms are led by an elected councillor and also attended by Provincial representatives in order to provide a mechanism to 'fast track' specific cases.

The approach of integrating older people's issues in to the War Rooms is an example of promising practice. It has the potential to join up multiple stakeholders, including older citizens, whilst the presence of senior officials enabled direct intervention and resolution in issues. This kind of mechanism can be helpful in addressing operational issues, but may be less appropriate for discussion of collective grievances or wider policy. Further, it was not clear how the Older Persons' Representatives came in to being, in other words if they were representing a Ward OPF or if they held some other community position. This aspect is important in ensuring that the issues of older people in relation to the OAG or other matters are effectively represented.

An **Older Person's Desk** has already been established in the Premier's Offices in Kwazulu Natal and Limpopo, with plans to have desks in all the other Provinces as well as a desk in the Office of the President. As the Provincial Premier's Offices and President's Office are political entities, the presence of an Older Person's Desk provides more motivation for the public institutions such as SASSA to proactively consult with and respond to older people. This serves to complement the SAOPF by providing a direct channel to the political institutions. Whilst the Older Person's Desks are set up by government and housed within existing government structures, their existence has been influenced through lobbying of the SAOPF, as well as the precedent set by desks for Women and for Youth. The SAOPF has been lobbying since 2007 for an Older Person's Desk and Parliament, and whilst it has been successful with the latter (see next paragraph), the former is yet to be approved.

A **Senior Citizens Parliament** currently exists at National and Provincial levels with the purpose of involving older people in democratic and political processes. It provides a forum in which older people can interact with Members of Parliament and Members of the Executive Council. The parliaments are an initiative of the Provincial Legislatures and DSD, and are linked to the establishment of the Older Person's Desks. Parliaments at Provincial level were initiated in 2009, whilst the inaugural national Parliament took place in 2012.

Each Parliament addresses a theme, for example "Building a caring society for Senior Citizens through Oversight and Public Participation" (National Parliament) or "Working together to intensify oversight to foster service delivery to our people" (Mpumalanga Provincial Parliament). During the session, older people can ask questions to the MPs and MECs, motions may be proposed, and resolutions passed which commits the MPs and MECs to action. It is not legally binding but plays a role in influencing legislation or service delivery.

As already demonstrated, South Africa has an active number of accountability mechanisms, organisations and institutes which are working with older people. In any context this presents a challenge for communication and effective collaborative working. In light of the large number of existing actors and processes, the **South Africa Ageing Network** has been formed to act as a body for improving coordination and information among organisations and stakeholders in the ageing sector, ensuring advocacy and policy influence is bottom up and that older people are mobilised at local level and engaging with government and other service providers.

The Network consists of members of a number of civil society organisations working with older people and the DSD, with a plan to expand the network. The rotating chair is currently held by the SAOPF. The presence of HelpAge International in the network also provides a link to regional and global ageing networks which are working for the rights of older people and provides a voice in relation to international and regional accountability mechanisms.

The **South Africa Human Rights Commission** is the independent national institution established to support constitutional democracy and is mandated under the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Its role is to promote respect for, and a culture of human rights; promote the protection, development and attainment of human rights; and monitor and assess the observance of human rights in South Africa. As such, the SAHRC is the main body for monitoring progress on Economic and Social Rights, including the right to social security or social assistance, which is guaranteed by the Constitution. The Commission requires relevant Ministries to report on progress made towards the realisation of rights, including social security.

However the remit of the SAHRC is somewhat hampered by resource and capacity constraints. Annual reports provided by relevant Ministries were viewed to not always be sufficiently consultative, based on representative data, or comprehensive enough to provide a full picture of progress, whilst some Ministries were not reporting. Furthermore, the current monitoring of human rights tends to focus on violations rather than progressive or positive realisation.

Recognising this gap, organisations such as SPII are carrying out **Independent Policy Monitoring** of Socio Economic Rights. SPII has developed a tool to monitor relevant legal obligations in the South Africa Constitution and international jurisprudence, which includes monitoring of the progressive realisation of the Right to Social Security across the domains of access, geography and quality with geographical disaggregation. The tool was developed on the basis of a review of the conceptual understanding of socio economic rights, different international frameworks for measuring human rights, and developed in consultation with relevant Government institutions.

These latter two approaches are examples of accountability mechanisms at the level of policy. A final area concerns the role of **litigation** as a mechanism for securing the right to social security. Many of the changes in the South Africa social security system have occurred largely as a result of external pressures of court cases or other political reasons. For example, the creation of SASSA arose as a result of a 2004 constitutional court case addressing the inability of provincial governments to properly administer the social grants²⁴ and thereby constrained the right of everyone to have access to social assistance. The case was not directly based on the right to social security, but on a number of technical provisions of the interim Constitution regulating transitional arrangements and determining the relationship between the legislative power at national and provincial levels²⁵.

More recently, the monitoring and advocacy organisation Black Sash (as previously referred to) took the Government to court in relation to the vast backlog of social grant appeals (largely in relation to the Disability Grant). This was seen to be the only route left after attempts to pursue other channels had not been forthcoming. Black Sash also monitors individual cases passing through the courts, for example in relation to older people who are caring for grandchildren having access to the Child Grant. However, other stakeholders viewed that if positive partnerships already exist with Government then the court route should not be necessary. Furthermore the role of a civil society organisation taking the government to court was called in to question as to whether they were legitimately representing the Grant recipients.

²⁴ Brand, D and Heyns, C (2005) Socio-economic rights in South Africa. Cape Town: ABC Press

²⁵ Ibid

Summary of mechanisms in Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda

The following section provides an overview of the social pension programmes and accountability mechanisms for the three other countries involved in the AFFORD project: Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda. The three countries are all at very different stages in the development of social pension programmes and as such provide interesting case studies for the development of accompanying accountability mechanisms.

Mozambique

The Social Protection Programme

The Government of Mozambique currently provides social protection to 270,000 labour-constrained households through a monthly cash transfer: the *Programma de Proteção Social Basica* (PSSB) which is delivered by the *Instituto Nacional de Accion Social* (INAS). Formerly known as the PSA, it was introduced in 1990. The programme is not a social pension per se, but it does reach around 261,000 older people (more than 90% of the total programme beneficiaries and 21% of the total population of older people).

The programme is targeted and has rigid eligibility criteria against incapacity to work and generate income, health status, age, nationality and residency status. Whilst the Social Protection Law 2007, the Regulation for Basic Social Security (2009) and the National Strategy for Basic Social Security (April 2010) go some way to articulate the principle of universalization of social protection they do not articulate firm legal commitment for a universal social pension.

The programme is currently under reform which has included the improvement of benefit levels and longer term development of an integrated Management and Information (MIS). The MIS will provide a platform for information and data management in all phases of basic social protection programming and provide space for civil society participation in complementary and/or independent monitoring. The reform is being supported by UN specialised agencies, namely UNICEF and ILO. It will also involve the private sector to offer alternative payment mechanisms of social benefits including the use of information and communication technologies.

Accountability mechanisms

In Mozambique, HelpAge has been implementing Older Citizen Monitoring (OCM) since 2005. OCM is a rights based approach to citizen engagement and helps communities monitor access to government services and deliver evidence-based advocacy. In 2013, HelpAge and the Mozambique Civil Society Platform for social protection (PSCM-PS) worked with local civil society organisations to pilot an Irish Aid funded Social Accountability System (MCI) in 13 communities across five provinces. Expansion across the country is now supported by funding from the Royal Netherlands Embassy. The MCI is endorsed by the government, designed to harmonise with the PSSB internal monitoring system, and complement the other community based approaches to delivery of the programme including the application process.

The official Government accountability mechanisms related to the PSSB provide channels for individual and collective grievances. Individuals may take grievances to the *Permanente* who is the community member officially selected to act as a liaison between the community and INAS for which they receive a stipend. Their role is to identify who is eligible for the cash transfer against a set of criteria which is then validated by INAS, to support individuals to apply, provide information to households about the programme, and carry out home visits for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

The Social Accountability Mechanism that began as a pilot in 2013 builds on the history of HelpAge OCM in Mozambique provides a channel for collective grievances through a 'community scorecard' methodology. This tool involves thirteen questions to grant recipients about the cash transfer with a yes/no answer. The answers are collected and ranked, and validated in focus group discussions with grant recipients and separate focus group discussions with community leaders including the Permanente. The most common three issues noted by the first monitoring cycle are: the recipient doesn't know who to complain to, doesn't know why they are receiving the cash transfer, and the Permanente was not elected. The first two

suggest a programme communication/information issue, whilst the third suggests a grant management issue at the level of the community delivery mechanism. The question of why the issues are occurring and practical options for resolving them are also discussed in the focus groups.

A further step involves the monitoring information being taken to district level by the NGO or community association where it is discussed with INAS district coordinators and other stakeholders, then to similar provincial forums and then to the PSCM-PS at national level. The monitoring information from the different communities is consolidated in a single report and presented in an annual national workshop with Government representatives including INAS, donors and civil society. The first workshop took place in October 2013. Unlike the South Africa example, Mozambique does not yet have a fully functioning network of Older People's Forums who are able to take up the accountability issues at different administration levels.

Good practice and challenges

Whilst the role of the *Permanente* in theory provides a channel for grant recipients to air grievances, many individuals and communities do not feel empowered to use this mechanism. A recent study carried out by the Overseas Development Institute²⁶ suggests that this issue stems from two problems. Firstly, grant recipients lack a sense of entitlement and see the transfer as a gift. Complaints are not made because there is a fear of reprisal or exclusion from the programme. This is particularly challenging in the context of a targeted programme with rigid eligibility criteria, where grant recipients are already the poorest and most vulnerable in their community, and often the most disempowered.

Secondly, lack of information about the programme amongst households, local leaders and the *Permanentes* was seen to lead to 'ineffective and passive targeting; households merely waiting for selection and inclusion in the programme' (ODI, 2013). Lack of information is linked with lack of transparency and in some cases local leaders and *Permanentes* were seen to control the selection process and subsequent relationships with INAS. In more positive instances, *Permanentes* played a key role in mediating between individuals and INAS, and supporting grant recipients to access their cash transfers.

However, in light of these power imbalances, relying on the *Permanentes* to provide a channel for grievances is neither a reliable nor systematic mechanism across the cash transfer programme. In this context, the community scorecard method provides an anonymous, simple and effective way of raising collective grievances about the programme which are validated with community and programme deliverers. This methodology also serves other purposes, as it provides an opportunity for monitors to give programme information to grant recipients. The community scorecard method could also be easily adapted to survey the use of the cash transfer to show impacts at household level and to highlight gaps.

A more practical challenge of the accountability mechanism is that monitoring is limited to a relatively small number of geographic areas and much of the monitoring data is still paper based and localised. Scale up and integration of the data collection and management into broader national-level MIS needs to be carefully considered in terms of the investment in infrastructure and sustainability of logistics, skills and time required to manage the data at the different administrative levels.

Finally, due to the community scorecard methodology being relatively new, the effectiveness of the methodology in terms of the changes has yet to be fully explored. Anecdotal evidence suggests that change has happened at community level, but any assessment on the methodology would need to take into account its success at achieving change at the different levels of administration both in terms of practice and policy, if indeed higher level changes were the intention.

²⁶ ODI (2013) Transforming Cash Transfers: Beneficiary and community perspectives on the Basic Social Subsidy Programme in Mozambique. Overseas Development Institute

Tanzania

The Social Protection Programme

There is currently no social pension in Tanzania but a campaign for a universal social pension has been going on for a number of years and in 2010 the Prime Minister confirmed the government's commitment to introducing a social pension. The Social Security Regulatory Authority (SSRA) are now designing the scheme which should be finalised in the next year. The current plan is to start a universal pension of TSZ 20,000 (13US\$) at age 70 and then progressively enrol down to age 60. Included in the discussions on the introduction of a social pension have been discussions around the need for a civil society led accountability mechanism, largely in relation to mainland Tanzania. Discussions on a civil society led accountability mechanism in Zanzibar are yet to take place.

Accountability mechanisms

As Tanzania does not yet have a social pension, there are no accountability mechanisms specifically related to a programme that narrowly focuses on operational issues. However accountability mechanisms in terms of existing space for state-citizen dialogue on the more fundamental issue of income security in older age are very much in existence. In fact older citizens, through their representative Older People's Forums (OPF), have played a key role in securing government commitment to introduce the universal social pension, and remain active in ensuring that the commitment is followed through.

The active participation of older people in decision making is clearly laid out in the National Ageing Policy, 2003²⁷. Representatives of OPF are allowed to participate in village and local government structures but are not allowed to vote, and the NAP is not legally binding. In 2010, the NAP was reviewed and a draft bill that provides a legal framework for its implementation was drafted but is yet to be approved. Despite this, the NAP partially provides an enabling environment for the participation of older people and establishment of OPF and shows the commitment of government to consultation. Through such mechanisms, local councils are engaged to ensure they include older people's issues in local council budgeting and planning.

The role of the OPF in local government deliberations in Tanzania is similar to that of the South Africa OPF but appears to be more systematic and comprehensive in nature. The role of the OPFs in South Africa and Tanzania are laid out in their respective ageing policies and both face budget and capacity constraints in practical implementation, but the difference in Tanzania is that there has been a linking NGO proactively supporting and building capacity of the OPF and local government over a sustained period of time. This has led to greater participation and empowerment of older people, and built their confidence to engage with decision makers.

As well as local councils, older people and OPF have also used other accountability mechanisms to engage government in dialogue on the right to income security in older age. This has included engaging political parties and elected representatives on the issue, especially during election periods. The media has also been used as a mechanism of accountability, with media allies sensitised on ageing issues and consistently and proactively involved in media campaigns promoting the issue amongst the public.

Good practice and challenges

The Tanzania case provides a positive example from the more political side of accountability. Here citizens are directly holding government and politicians to account in relation to broader social and economic rights. This process has not only involved older citizens in debate, but also younger citizens who have not yet reached older age. After all, the vision for the universal

²⁷ Article 3.14 Older People's Councils. National Ageing Policy 2003, Ministry of Labour, Youth Development and Sport, United Republic of Tanzania.

social pension in Tanzania is a long term one in which income security for all old Tanzanians is guaranteed, rather than a short term focus on those who are already old and vulnerable.

The accountability relationship in Tanzania is constructive because it is based on political demand and open state-citizen relations. When the universal social pension is eventually implemented, a strong foundation has already been made for developing accountability mechanisms to address the more operational side of programme delivery. Systems will need to be developed, but older people will already feel empowered to raise grievances related to the programme. It is hard to imagine that this would be the case with an externally imposed, poverty targeted programme.

Alongside planning for the proposed universal social pension, discussions are already underway on the management systems, including accountability mechanisms. The current OPF model provides a positive starting point in terms of inclusive and consultative spaces for older people to engage in dialogue with government stakeholders and politicians. One challenge is that Tanzania operates a decentralised government system whereupon local government has large powers. This makes it possible to engage in dialogue with local governments and affect change at local level if they have local control of budgets and programmes. A centrally mandated programme such as a universal social pension may involve additional challenges in terms of ensuring adequate information flow between tiers of government, as well as setting up OPF and citizen monitoring models, especially as Tanzania has 138 district councils.

In this context, collecting and recording data provides a crucial mechanism for ensuring the flow of information and to be able to monitor whether grievances are being addressed. This also needs to be accompanied by clear understanding amongst both citizens and service providers of their rights and responsibilities, as well as the criteria and procedures for lodging grievances in order to provide a benchmark for monitoring. The intention is not to replace direct dialogue between citizens and local government, but to complement and strengthen them.

Uganda

The Social Protection Programme

The Senior Citizens Grant is a pilot social pension program with an eligibility age of 65, or 60 in the Karamoja region where life expectancy is lower. The program is currently running in 14 out of 100 districts and forms part of the Expanding Social Protection (ESP) Programme, led by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (GLSD). The ESP is a five year programme aimed at embedding a social protection system in to broader national planning and budgeting including the National Development Plan (NDP), Social Development Sector Strategic Investment Plan (SDIP) and National Policy for older people. As well as the SCG pilot it also includes a pilot Vulnerable Family Support Grant (VFSG) and development of a social protection framework and policy. The programme is funded by DIFD/UKAID, Irish Aid and UNICEF and runs until 2015, at which point it is expected to expand nationally. The government has been finalising plans for including the social pension in the next budget and consulting with civil society through the NGO forum on social protection.

The most common complaint related to the SCG is the long distance to the paypoints. In some areas, the cash transfers are delivered through mobile money accounts, but in areas where there is no network they are still delivered manually. In areas where the transfer is delivered through mobile money accounts, network connectivity problems meant that older people were sometimes unable to collect their payment from the mobile money agent. This proved to be a particular problem in cases where the older person only had sufficient funds for one way transport and was relying on their cash transfer for the return fare.

In some areas, registration for the SCG is still ongoing due to slow roll out (to prevent fraud) and issues with age verification as some older people do not have any documentation. In these cases, peers have to be relied upon to verify their age. A fear of being formally registered has also caused delays in registering older people for the SCG.

Accountability mechanisms

Before the ESP Programme started, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Government of Uganda, DFID and the Ministry of Finance and strongly featured accountability in terms of both programme delivery and management of funds. Each district council in the pilot project signed an MoU with the Ministry of GLSD to monitor the effectiveness of the cash transfer and to document complaints at a Parish level²⁸.

In a similar arrangement to the PSSB in Mozambique, the SGC in Uganda has accountability channels for both individual and collective grievances. The individual accountability mechanism is integrated in to the SGC programme, whereupon complaints can be submitted to the Parish Chief or to the sub-county Community Development Officer either at the paypoint (in the case of manual delivery) or at the local SCG office (in the case of mobile money accounts). Upon submission of a formal complaint in writing, the older person will receive a receipt and be informed about the timescale for redress. If an older person cannot read or write then someone will help them to complete the complaint form. Details about resolved complaints and complaints which have to be handled at district or national level are passed on to the programme district team on a monthly basis. The district team is also responsible for taking up complaints with the Payment Service Provider or other stakeholders. Anonymous complaints are not accepted so as to reduce the scope for malicious complaints²⁹.

The system of completing complaint forms for individual grievances however become onerous and there was a backlog of complaints, in some cases up to 6 months³⁰. In light of this, the programme secretariat agreed that Older Citizen Monitoring Groups could be set up to collect information on grievances. The OCMG would complement the existing accountability mechanism but address more fundamental programme delivery issues rather than reacting to individual cases. The OCMG works through existing Older People's Association structures. Older people are provided with information on their right to social security and what they can do if they have a problem with their grant. Each OPA nominates a representative who documents grievances anonymously, and these are shared in monthly meetings between the OPA groups and ESP team at district level.

Good practice and challenges

The OCMG was only introduced in September 2013 so its effectiveness as an accountability mechanism is not fully known. However in general the OCMG was seen to be a positive development as older people were able to raise issues anonymously. This was seen to be preferable than going directly to community leaders or programme staff, as many older people were reluctant to share their concerns for fear they may be victimised or have their benefit stopped³¹. However, the fact that the SCG is categorical (based on age and geographic location and therefore easier for beneficiaries to understand why they are receiving it) makes this less likely to occur than in a targeted programme. The OCMGs are also seen to be more accountable and legitimate by older people because the monitors are nominated by the OPA, unlike the Parish Chief or Community Development Officer.

An accountability mechanism which does not create additional physical travel for the older person was seen as a key criterion, one option being OCMG/OPA for raising collective grievances, particularly if they are already used as mechanisms for other interventions such as health or livelihoods. In spite of the drawbacks of a Parish Leader or Community Development Officer at the paypoint (in the case of manual delivery) in some cases it was seen as positive

²⁸ In Uganda the village is the lowest political administrative unit, followed by a parish which is made up of a number of villages, then a sub-county which is made up of a number of villages, a county and then the district:

<http://www.theguardian.com/katine/2009/dec/14/local-government-explainer>

²⁹ Frequently Asked Questions, Expanding Social Protection Programme <http://www.socialprotection.go.ug/faq%27s.php> visited 17th March 2014

³⁰ ODI (2013) Transforming Cash Transfers: Beneficiary and community perspectives on the Senior Citizen Grant in Uganda. Overseas Development Institute

³¹ Ibid

because it meant older people did not have to make an additional journey to a separate office to lodge a complaint.

The ESP Secretariat is reviewing tools that can be applicable for a civil society led accountability mechanism when the SCG programme is expanded and has consulted the National Network for Older Persons in Uganda on how older people can be included. However, the motivation for accountability mechanisms is often seen as donor-led agenda, calling in to question the sustainability of the accountability mechanisms after the donors have exited the programme.

In relation to the accountability mechanisms for broader policy and legislation issues, rather than programme delivery, there have been some recent positive developments in terms of openings for older people to engage in dialogue with key stakeholders. A Bill for a National Council of Older Persons Council came into an Act in February 2013 and provides for the establishment of councils of older people from village level through to national level. The role of the councils will be to coordinate all issues related to older people, generate issues for discussion (such as the expansion of the SCG) and contribute to development planning processes. Representation in political councils, meaning the ability to vote, is permitted up to district level. Whilst this is a positive step for the inclusion of older people, the Act is not yet implemented or adequately resourced.

Discussion and conclusions

This South Africa case study has provided a mapping of accountability mechanisms related to the social pension. These channels are used for raising and discussing individual and collective grievances directly related to the operation of the OAG, as well as more fundamental and wider policy issues related to social protection systems. The previous sections described the mechanisms in terms of their purpose, a summary of how they operate and who the key actors are. This section highlights some of the common themes, promising practice and challenges emerging from the stakeholder interviews as well as drawing on wider literature related to older people and accountability mechanisms.

In order that social protection programmes can be more accessible for older men and women, accountability mechanisms also need to be accessible. In the South Africa context efforts to increase the number of channels available for older people to address both individual and collective grievances is certainly encouraging. However, the very formal nature of the individual grievance mechanisms means that older people may be unable to access these mechanisms without the support described in Section 6.2.

The nature of the individual grievance mechanisms may well have resulted from the accountability mechanisms having been designed with a broad-brush approach to cater for all Grant recipients. However if individual (and collective) accountability mechanisms are to promote the respect and dignity of older people rather than perpetuate unequal relationships, than they must recognise and be designed to take in to account the physiological and social changes that are associated with normal ageing.

In the context of its humanitarian relief work, HelpAge International is developing an accountability framework and guidance for communicating with older people³². This is to ensure that older people are included in response efforts and accountability mechanisms are appropriate and effective. The principles for effective communication, which is the backbone of accountability, are equally transferable to non-humanitarian contexts. For example, normal ageing involves specific physiological changes such as deteriorating sight and hearing, decline in memory and slower processing of information. Whilst psychosocial adjustments may include

³² Bhardwaj, R (*Forthcoming*) Module 6: Inclusive Communication. HelpAge International

lessening of power and influence, and withdrawal from economic and social networks³³. The latter may be particularly exacerbated in old age if older people have already experienced a lifetime of marginalisation for example on the basis of gender, ethnicity, or race.

Responses from the stakeholder interviews which referred to older people being “confused” by the hotline or “not understanding” information given by officials, may actually result from an older person being hearing impaired. Age may affect accuracy of perception and ability to hear certain sounds, especially at higher frequencies such as speech, and where there is background noise³⁴. Changes in vision may occur, as well as slowing reaction times meaning more time is needed to process information and come up with an answer³⁵.

Accountability mechanisms related to social pensions or other kinds of grants for older people must be tailored to the specific physiological and psychosocial changes which accompany the ageing process. This should include sensitising frontline staff and those involved in designing the operationalization of accountability mechanisms within social pension programmes, as well as conducting research in to the effectiveness of current mechanisms. At the same time it must be recognised that older people are not a homogeneous group and may be affected by physiological and psychosocial at different stages of the ageing process and in different ways.

In light of this, the SAOPF at Ward level, the Pension Committees, and the Older People’s Service Centres offer real potential for an alternative to formal accountability mechanisms. Providing space for older people to discuss issues related to the OAG more informally could either replace or complement the formal mechanisms, depending on how the overall accountability mechanism is designed. However a lack of resources and capacity was noted as a particular challenge in establishing these structures as well as how to involve the most marginalised older people who may have other responsibilities such as informal work or caring for grandchildren.

This mapping, and experience from HelpAge’s wider work, has shown that strengthening these processes through citizen monitoring and associations of older people serves multiple purposes. Integrating data collection and semi-formalisation of SAOPF at Ward level builds accountability in to the SAOPF structure, as well as providing recorded and more credible evidence for presenting to relevant stakeholders. HelpAge International’s accountability work in Mozambique, Tanzania and elsewhere has extensive experience to offer in this area.

In the process of collecting data and conducting meetings amongst older people, it also provides an opportunity to identify and refer individuals who are in need of specific advice about a grievance. Raising awareness amongst older people about their rights and entitlements is also a promising practice, but should be carried out on a more regular basis. An older person who has suffered a lifetime of marginalisation and discrimination will not suddenly gain a sense of entitlement or empowerment in a matter of one or two training or information sessions. Integrating more regular sessions into the remit as well as the culture of the Service Centres, Pension Committees or SAOPF at Ward level is an important step. It was highlighted that some leaders of these centres/groups were lacking awareness about rights and entitlements which does not bode well for the wider group.

Older people should be central to community monitoring and advocacy but these processes do not have to be carried out in isolation. Collaborative relationships with other stakeholder groups should be sought as a way of building networks, dialogue and benefit from existing expertise and knowledge. For example the Ward SAOPF, the Pension Committees and Older People’s Service Centres could draw on the experience of monitoring and advocacy organisations like the Black Sash, as well as the extensive experience in older citizens monitoring from other countries including Mozambique and Tanzania. Equally, citizen

³³ Harwood J. *Understanding Communication and Ageing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications; 2007.

³⁴ Tolson D and McIntosh J. (1997) Listening in the care environment - chaos or clarity for the hearing impaired elderly person. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 34(3): 173-182.

³⁵ Bhardwaj, R (*Forthcoming*) Module 6: Inclusive Communication. HelpAge International

monitoring data should not be used in isolation but should be triangulated with other monitoring reports for example from the municipality or institutions delivering the Grant (if available) in order to confirm findings or contest discrepancies, which also helps to build credibility.

A collaborative relationship between communities, government and other stakeholders is an example of promising practice, as also suggested by the Sukuma Sakhe approach in Kwazulu Natal province. This is important not just for ensuring that older people are able to engage in dialogue, but because both supply and demand side stakeholders need to be involved in monitoring, training and awareness-raising about older people's rights as well as standards of service delivery related to the OAG. At the same time, entering in to collaborative relationships is context dependent and has to be done with full awareness of the opportunities and risks for example in relation to the co-option of SAOPF. Monitoring and advocacy should maintain both "insider" and "outsider" strategies.

A number of other issues arising from the South Africa case study also warrant consideration in the review and development of accountability mechanisms for social pensions or other kinds of old age grants. For example, the delivery of the OAG gradually moving over to an automated payment system managed by a private service provider highlights an additional reason to create spaces for older people to discuss grievances. As groups of older people are less likely to meet at a paypoint on a specific date, monitoring by CSOs at service points and opportunities for older people to discuss issues together becomes less common. The lengthened "chain" of accountability as third party service providers are increasingly involved in delivery also adds another layer of complexity to addressing and resolving grievances for an individual older person.

Deciding what accountability mechanisms to put in place will also be influenced by what is being monitored - whether operational issues or a wider approach. Government initiated accountability mechanisms tend to focus on operational issues and indicators may be tied to increasing efficiency and delivery of services. Whereas civil society initiated mechanisms may monitor broader issues such as access, adequacy and quality.

Accountability mechanisms designed for a short-term donor funded programme are also more likely to focus on operational issues to improve programme efficiency. In turn, this may influence a grant recipient's use of accountability mechanisms, whereupon if transfers are seen as a gift (rather than an entitlement) the volume of complaints and grievances is generally low³⁶. Whereas a social protection system enshrined in legislation and citizenship rights may adopt wider reaching accountability mechanisms as part of broader democratic governance as in the case of South Africa. In some ways, accountability frameworks reflect the overall approach to social protection.

Understanding where decision-making lies and to what extent information travels between different administrative levels is another influencing factor in the development of accountability mechanisms. The commitment to establish SAOPF at all administrative levels in South Africa signifies an effort to improve the flow of information between Wards and the National level platform, but gaps in the coverage of accountability mechanisms (for example in remote rural areas or where the coverage of older people's service centres or social workers is sparser) need to be identified and closed.

Including representatives of SASSA and other government departments in SAOPF regular meetings at the majority of the administrative levels, as well as using existing mechanisms such as the War Rooms in KZN, provides a parallel channel for facilitating information flows. Monitoring the extent to which information flows between the levels of the SAOPF and of SASSA (especially considering the large number of Ward SAOPFs) should be built in to a monitoring and evaluation framework for the SAOPF. Of equal importance is whether the

³⁶ Jones, N and Samuels, F (2013) Holding Cash Transfers to Account: Beneficiary and Community Perspectives. Overseas Development Institute

SAOPF and other accountability mechanisms actually contribute to tangible change in practice and policy.

The South Africa case study has highlighted a number of channels in which older people, or their representatives as it currently stands, can raise grievances. However there is little knowledge on the effectiveness of these accountability mechanisms, whether they are appropriate and accessible for older people and if they are resulting in action or change. This lack of evidence is not just common to the South Africa case, but to the region. A recent systematic review investigating the role of community accountability mechanisms and processes in inclusive service delivery in Africa similarly highlighted an "urgent need for studies to evaluate the impact of interventions on older people and people with disabilities... There is a major gap in the evidence for interventions aimed at strengthening community accountability and inclusive service delivery for these groups"³⁷. Understanding what works, and in particular what is appropriate and accessible for older people, is particularly important and timely as accountability mechanisms are developed and expanded in a number of countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

³⁷ Lynch et al (2013) What is the evidence that the establishment or use of community accountability mechanisms and processes improves inclusive service delivery by governments, donors and NGOs to communities? Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London

Annex One: Map of South Africa showing Provincial demarcations

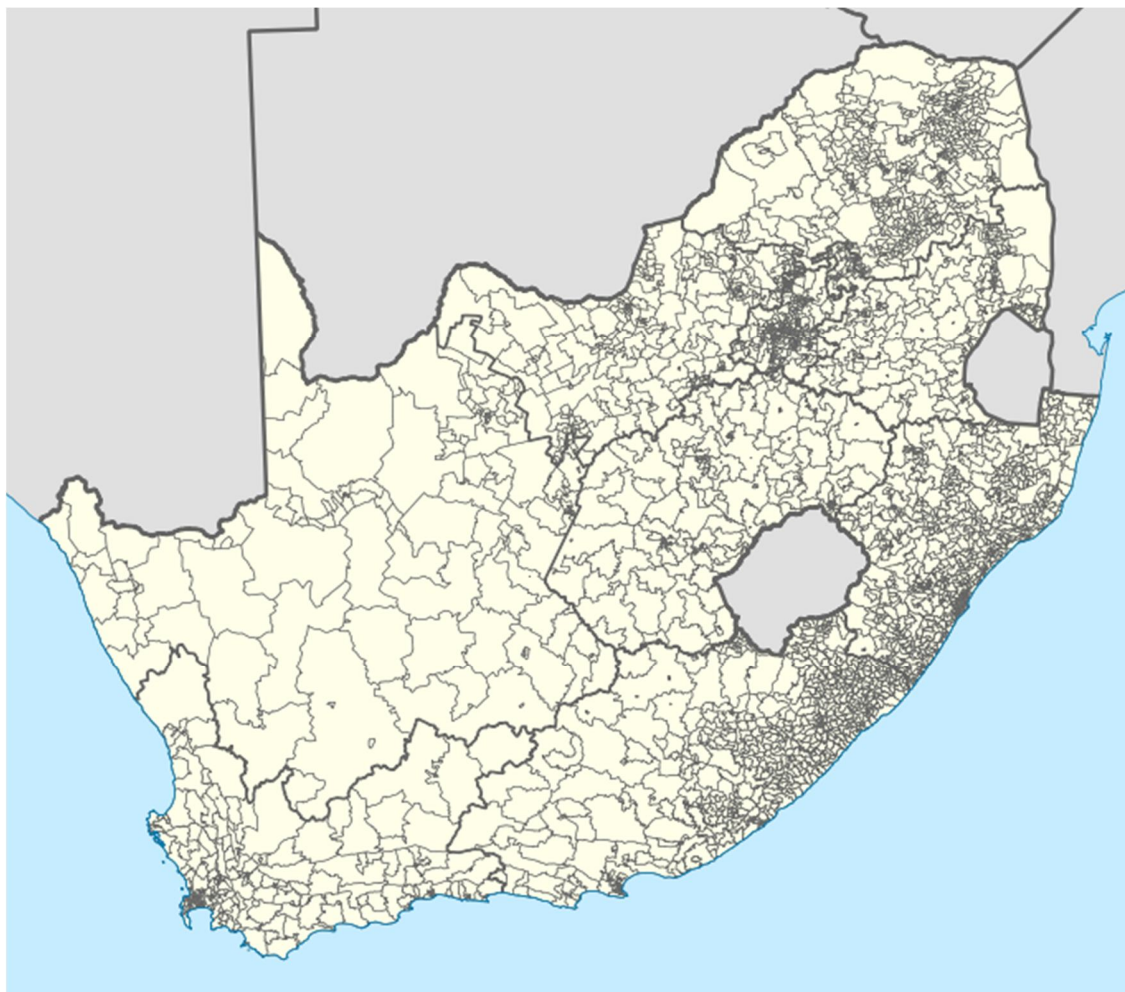


Source:

Htonl (2010) Map of South Africa with English labels

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_South_Africa_with_English_labels.svg Accessed 10th December 2013

Annex Two: Map of South Africa showing Electoral Ward demarcations



Source:

Htonl (2011) South Africa electoral awards 2011 blank
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:South_Africa_electoral_wards_2011_blank.svg Accessed 10th December 2013

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