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***Service delivery reform in Nigeria: The rise and fall of  
the Conditional Grant Scheme to Local Government  
Areas (CGS to LGAs)***

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## **Abstract**

This paper analyses Nigeria's Conditional Grant Scheme to Local Government Areas (CGS to LGAs). It tracks the design and implementation of CGS to LGAs at multiple levels, with a conceptual focus on the dynamics of state capacity and elite commitment. The paper finds that, while considerable progress was made initially with reforms, the increase in patronage politics following the change in national political leadership in 2011 meant that reforms were not sustained. At the local level, the scheme partly achieved its objectives, as in Guri LGA, where an informal development coalition seized the opportunity to increase spending and improve LGA capacity to deliver basic education and health services. The reforms were less effective in other LGAs, such as Mashi, where pre-existing factors, especially elite capture and frequent turnover of civil servants, undermined reforms. Even in difficult governance contexts, service delivery programmes can be designed and implemented in a manner that is both technically adequate and politically smart to achieve better development outcomes. However, sustaining such gains requires the continued commitment of political and bureaucratic elites along the implementation chain.

**Keywords:** Nigeria, service delivery, elite commitment, state capacity, political economy, CGS to LGAs

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## **Abbreviations**

CGS	Conditional Grant Scheme
CGS to LGAs	Conditional Grant Scheme to Local Government Areas
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DRG	Debt relief gains
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
FGD	Focus group discussion
FGN	Federal Government of Nigeria
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LEA(s)	Local education authority(s)
LGA(s)	Local government/local government area(s)
MDAs	Federal ministries, department and agencies
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NCCGS	National Committee on the Conditional Grant Scheme
NEEDS	National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy
NMIS	Nigeria MDGs Information System
OSSAP-MDGs	Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on MDGs
PHC	Primary health care
PDP	Peoples Democratic Party
PSU(s)	Project support unit(s)
SFP	State MDGs Focal Person
SPARC	State Partnership for Accountability, Responsiveness and Capability
SSAP-MDGs	Senior special assistant to the president on MDGs
TA(s)	Technical assistant(s)
VHW(s)	Village health worker(s)
ZTO(s)	Zonal technical officer(s)

## **1. Introduction**

In 2005, Nigeria and the Paris Club of Creditors reached an historic agreement on a US\$18 billion or 60 percent write-off of the country's Paris Club debt (Okonjo-Iweala, 2006). This deal resulted in savings (debt relief gains or DRG) of approximately US\$1 billion annually to the country. The Nigerian government committed itself to 'spending the DRG on pro-poor programmes and projects' towards achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Subsequently, the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on MDGs (OSSAP-MDGs) was established to coordinate the implementation of DRG-financed programmes.

Early attempts by OSSAP-MDGs to channel the DRG resources through the federal ministries, department and agencies (MDAs) between 2006 and 2009 did not yield poverty-reduction outcomes, as the existing service delivery systems continued to perform poorly. As a result, the federal government sought new ways to achieve the MDGs at the sub-national level and the Conditional Grant Scheme to Local Government Areas (CGS to LGAs) was designed in 2010 to promote commitment to, and raise capacity for, pro-poor service delivery. Initially, 113 pilot LGAs were selected across the 36 states in Nigeria. The CGS to LGAs was well resourced, well designed in technical terms and was politically smart, as it sought to partly 'go with the grain' of governance in Nigeria, rather than establish an independent programme management unit bypassing existing structures.

This paper traces the design and implementation of the CGS to LGAs, focusing on the extent to which it reshaped state capacity and elite commitment to pro-poor service delivery at the federal, state and LGA levels. It aims to deepen the understanding of service delivery reform at sub-national level, with a theoretical focus on the roles of elite commitment and state capacity.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 outlines the analytical framework and methodology; Section 3 briefly explores Nigeria's Fourth Republic service delivery reforms (1999-2015); Section 4 traces the origin of the CGS to LGAs following the Paris Club debt relief deal in 2005 and analyses the design and implementation of the scheme at multiple levels; and Section 5 presents the main findings and concludes.

## **2. Theoretical framework and methodology**

Analyses of service delivery reform have adopted different conceptual frameworks (Weber, 1968; Rondinelli, 1993; Batley, 2004; Besley and Ghatak, 2007). In this paper we build on Lavers and Hickey's (2015) framework. This posits that access to basic services for poor and disadvantaged groups can be improved when elites (especially political, business and bureaucratic elites) strengthen their commitment to pro-poor service delivery and state capacity is raised. These two factors interact, both positively and negatively. Increased elite commitment is likely to lead to the allocation of more resources for service delivery and a greater focus on incentives for

performance. Conversely, reduced elite commitment is likely to lead to lowered resourcing, weaker levels of accountability and less effective delivery. To achieve elite commitment and raise state capacity, it may be necessary for reform programmes to be 'politically smart' (Booth and Unsworth, 2014) in ensuring they fit their local context, and to 'go with the grain' (Levy, 2014) and accept some of the informal institutional arrangements and operational imperfections of pre-existing systems, rather than introducing an ideal model.

The analytical fields of elite commitment and state capacity have recently received renewed attention (Brinkerhoff, 2000; McCourt, 2003; Vom Hau, 2012; Fukuyama, 2013). However, much of this scholarship remains abstract and very few empirical studies examine the sub-national level (exceptions include Lavers, 2016; Chopra, 2015; and Bukenya, 2012). More importantly, comparative case studies of sub-national regions, states and districts – where resource levels are similar, but outcomes are different – are rare in the literature.

Elite commitment is defined as 'the commitment of actors to undertake actions to achieve a set of objectives...and to sustain the costs of those actions over time' (Brinkerhoff, 2000: 242). Elite commitment is identified through five indicators: locus of initiative; continuity of effort; mobilisation of support; degree of analytical rigour; and application of sanctions. We note, however, that elites can be both challenged and engrossed in the same process, depending on the accountability mechanisms in place (Wong, 2010: 12).

State capacity is defined as 'the ability of state agencies to plan and execute policies and programmes within the territory it claims to govern – including internal forms of bureaucratic capacity and autonomy' (Fukuyama, 2013). Central to state capacity is the concept of bureaucratic capacity. This refers to the organisational resources and the degree of professionalisation of bureaucratic staff. Autonomy relates to the way the political principal issues mandates to the public servant who acts as its agent (ibid: 356). To analyse the quality of governance, both the capacity and the autonomy of the bureaucracy must be assessed (ibid).

Our study employed a process-tracing methodology, reconstructing the documented and undocumented sequences of events (George and Bennett, 2005). It starts with the origin, design and implementation of the CGS to LGAs scheme, and seeks to identify the causal mechanisms operating along its implementation chain. Fieldwork was conducted in Nigeria between December 2015 and April 2016 and involved policy documents analysis; key informant interviews; and focus group discussions with benefiting communities' members. Respondents were purposefully selected based on their direct involvement in the design and implementation of the CGS to LGAs. At the national level, where the major design decisions on the scheme were taken, 14 key informant interviews were conducted with officials from agencies involved with the scheme. At the sub-national level, two contrasting cases were investigated in detail – Guri and Mashi LGAs. These LGAs were purposefully

selected from two neighbouring states, representing ‘high quality’ and ‘low quality’ implementation cases, respectively<sup>1</sup>. The Appendix provides lists of key informant interviews and details of focus group discussions.

### **3. The context for service delivery reform**

The CGS to LGAs was designed and implemented during Nigeria’s Fourth Republic, which commenced in 1999. Following long years of military rule, Obasanjo’s administration (1999-2007) introduced far-reaching pro-poor service delivery reforms. These included the establishment and funding of the National Poverty Eradication Programme; Universal Basic Education Commission; National Primary Healthcare Development Agency; and other programmes. Taken together, these efforts, alongside the establishment of the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on MDGs (OSSAP-MDGs), led analysts and development partners to conclude that President Obasanjo was strongly committed to improving service delivery (Porter and Watts, 2016; IMF, 2005; SPARC, 2015; NL5, 14 January 2016). Obasanjo was also praised for the ‘merit-based’ appointment of top-government officials and was able to undertake these reforms because he had few political debts to settle, was in control of his party’s decision-making organs, and ran the government like a ‘military dictator’ (Porter and Watts, 2016). He served as president for two terms of four years (the constitutional limit), and thus had a relatively long time horizon for the pursuit of policies and programmes.

The Yar’Adua administration (2007-2010) was credited with sustaining the Obasanjo administration’s reforms, specifically scaling up investments towards the MDGs and strengthening public procurement processes and anti-corruption agencies (Dode, 2010; NL2, 10 February 2016; OSSAP-MDGs, 2014a). President Yar’Adua’s Economic Management Team spearheaded the development of the country’s long-term development plan, *Nigeria Vision 20:2020* (National Planning Commission, 2009). However, the long-term absence from office of Yar’Adua, due to ill-health, weakened the implementation of these reforms and partly destabilised the political environment (Adeniyi, 2011). Yar’Adua died three years into his presidency in May 2010 and Vice President Jonathan became president.

Jonathan’s administration set out to improve human development and accelerate progress towards the MDGs through its *Transformation Agenda* (National Planning Commission, 2011). To achieve this, it aimed to ‘strengthen and pilot initiatives’ to improve education, healthcare and the targeting and delivery of social safety net programmes (ibid; SPARC, 2015; NL5, 14 January 2016). However, informed observers reported that pre-existing service delivery reforms were not sustained and the distribution of resources and programmes under the Jonathan administration was largely based on political patronage and disproportionately favoured states controlled by the ruling Peoples’ Democratic Party (PDP) (NL10, 24 April 2016; NL2, 10 February 2016; Adeniyi, 2017). Overall, the relatively strong high-level commitment

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<sup>1</sup> For full details of the methodology see Yusuf (2017).

to service delivery reform that existed in 1999 reduced after 2007 and weakened dramatically after 2010.

#### **4. The Conditional Grant Scheme to Local Government Areas (CGS to LGAs)**

Following disappointing outcomes in the initial attempts at implementing the DRG resources through federal ministries, departments and agencies, problems with state governments and the capacity challenges they revealed, OSSAP-MDGs introduced the CGS to LGAs in 2010 to ‘foster genuine commitment to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at the local level’ (OSSAP-MDGs, 2014a), while reforming governance in the process.<sup>2</sup> Table 1 provides a timeline of key DRG activities leading to CGS to LGAs implementation. The scheme provided LGAs with the opportunity to access DRG funds annually for investments in primary healthcare, education, and water and sanitation. It was conditional on selected LGAs providing 50 percent counterpart funding and contingent on abiding with specific criteria and governance guidelines detailed in the *CGS Implementation Manual* (OSSAP-MDGs, 2010, 2011, 2014a). The *Implementation Manual* states that:

‘Through the CGS, the federal government seeks to build the capacities of LGAs to improve governance, service delivery, financial management, transparency and accountability. Ultimately, it is an opportunity to leverage spending towards supporting LGA programmes that are fully aligned with national policy objectives and the MDGs’ (OSSAP-MDGs 2014a: 9).

**Table 1: Timeline of key debt relief gains (DRG) events/activities leading to the establishment of CGS to LGAs scheme**

<b>Period</b>	<b>Events/activities</b>
January, 2006	DRG implementation commences with federal MDAs.
December, 2006	Realisation that MDAs lacked delivery and coordination capacity and the ‘idea’ of engaging sub-national governments (state) is conceived.
January, 2007	The process of engaging with state governments commenced and US\$133million/₦20billion of DRG funds released to 19 states and FCT.
June, 2009	Realisation of ‘lack of genuine engagement’ with the state governments and decision to allocate DRG funds directly to the LGAs.
May – June, 2010	CGS to LGAs designed and 113 pilot LGAs selected.
June, 2010	Sensitisation and training workshops for key LGA officials commenced.
July, 2011	Technical assistants (TAs) and zonal technical officers (ZTOs) for CGS to LGAs appointed.

Source: Yusuf (2017), Table 5.1.

<sup>2</sup> NL1, 31 December 2015.

#### **4.1. CGS to LGAs at the national level**

Three main phases can be identified in the design and implementation of the CGS to LGAs. First, **the selection phase** involved a conscious attempt by OSSAP-MDGs' leadership to gain the buy-in of state governors and, at the same time, avoid the potential problem of governors selecting pilot LGAs based on patronage. A key informant observed: 'The selection of the participating LGAs can be hijacked by the state governors... as they can pick LGAs where they know they can get votes from and there is no way for you to say "no" because of their influence...'.<sup>3</sup> Thus, OSSAP-MDGs leadership introduced objective measures, human development indicators from the National Bureau of Statistics, to pre-select the nine most deprived LGAs in each state (three per senatorial zone) – identifying 333 LGAs for shortlisting. In the light of the DRG resources earmarked for the CGS, OSSAP-MDGs decided to 'pilot' three LGAs per state and in the FCT.<sup>4</sup>

To select the 113 pilot LGAs from the shortlisted 333, the senior special assistant to the president on MDGs personally visited each state governor and presented a 'background paper' and a list of the nine LGAs in their state with the poorest indicators. Each governor was asked to select three pilot LGAs from these lists. This high level of personal action by a ministerial-level official provides evidence of the SSAP-MDGs' commitment to the scheme. According to a top civil servant this was done, '...so that any LGA that is eventually picked by the state governor would have met the criteria for selection... that way, the governors will not say they were not aware ...'.<sup>5</sup> This process was confirmed by key decision makers and officials of development partner institutions.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, the location of OSSAP-MDGs in the presidency ensured that governors knew the SSAP-MDGs had political support from the highest level.<sup>7</sup>

However, the process of selecting the 113 pilot LGAs was as much a political process (i.e. had to 'go with the grain' of power relations in Nigeria) as a technocratic exercise, for several reasons. First, the decision to select one LGA per senatorial zone in each state was a product of high-level politicking,<sup>8</sup> as a purely technical approach would have concentrated resources in zones where poverty was most severe. OSSAP-MDGs' leadership were challenged to convince the members of the federal legislature (Senate in particular) to 'agree' to the CGS to LGAs concept of objectively targeting the poorest LGAs. Eventually, the senators, using their power of appropriation, influenced the decision to 'select one LGA' from each senatorial zone in the state, regardless of the level of poverty in that zone. A former member of the parliament revealed that: '...there is no way the proposal [CGS to LGAs] will get the approval of the Senate without the required national spread... it just can't fly in

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<sup>3</sup> NL1, 31 December 2015.

<sup>4</sup> NL2, 10 February 2016; NL5, 14 January 2016.

<sup>5</sup> NL1, 31 December 2016.

<sup>6</sup> NL2, 10 February 2016; NL5, 14 January 2016; NL6, 19 January 2016.

<sup>7</sup> NL2, 10 February 2016.

<sup>8</sup> NL1, 31 December 2015; NL2, 10 February 2016.



Nigeria'.<sup>9</sup> It is evident the senators negotiated with OSSAP-MDGs for the 'national spread' (one LGA for each senatorial constituency) in return for their support for the scheme.

Second came **the capacity development phase** with the process for the sensitisation (initial training) of the 113 participating LGAs. OSSAP-MDGs invited all the chairmen and heads of departments from these LGAs to attend zonal sensitisation workshops (OSSAP-MDGs, 2011; interviewee<sup>10</sup>). The sensitisation process was to ensure the 'commitment and buy-in to accelerate progress towards the MDGs by the participating LGAs, as well as achieving a consensus regarding CGS to LGAs approach, structure and implementation modalities' (OSSAP-MDGs, 2014a: 9). Key informants at national and sub-national levels confirmed that these sensitisation workshops were carried out as programmed; that LGA chairmen and top bureaucrats attended; and, that participants were reasonably satisfied with the CGS to LGAs approach.<sup>11</sup>

As part of its strategy to strengthen the capacity of the pilot LGAs, OSSAP-MDGs recruited 113 technical assistants (TAs), one for each LGA. The TAs needed high quality planning and management skills and were to lead the LGA technical committees in project selection and implementation. The federal government, through OSSAP-MDGs, recruited the TAs on a 'merit-based system'. A respondent noted 'the TAs have highly diverse profiles, all deeply passionate about achieving the MDGs in their respective localities'.<sup>12</sup> To reinforce the capacity of TAs, six experienced zonal technical officers (ZTOs) were engaged by OSSAP-MDGs under a strategic partnership with the United Nations Development Programme, Nigeria.<sup>13</sup> The ZTOs were mandated to coordinate the activities of the TAs and provide technical support to the LGAs in the implementation of the CGS to LGAs. OSSAP-MDGs organised a two-week intensive training programme for the TAs and ZTOs, covering all aspects of the scheme's concept and implementation strategies (OSSAP-MDGs, 2011; interviewees<sup>14</sup>). Our interviews revealed that this exercise was conducted, all TAs and ZTOs attended and human resource records were kept during the programme.<sup>15</sup> Subsequent capacity-building training events and workshops were held during the scheme's implementation at multiple levels. All the evidence points to initial implementation of the scheme contributing to raised bureaucratic capacity in LGAs.

The third phase, **full implementation**, commenced with the release of the *CGS to LGAs Implementation Manual*, specifying the scheme's governance structures and the roles and responsibilities of all actors (OSSAP-MDGs, 2011; NL2, 10 February

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<sup>9</sup> NL14, 31 January 2016.

<sup>10</sup> NL5, 14 January 2016.

<sup>11</sup> NL12, 14 January 2016; GL1, 25 February 2016; ML1, 15 March 2016.

<sup>12</sup> NL2, 10 February 2016.

<sup>13</sup> NL6, 19 January 2016.

<sup>14</sup> NL3, 22 January 2016; NL12, 14 January 2016.

<sup>15</sup> NL1, 31 January 2015; NL5, 14 January 2016.

2016). By December 2010, the baseline studies and needs assessments for all 113 LGAs had been completed with the support of technical partners and 'gap maps' for all the intervention areas produced.<sup>16</sup> February At the national level, the National Committee on the Conditional Grants Scheme (NCCGS) – chaired by the minister of finance, with the minister of national planning, ministers of key MDGs line ministries, director-general of the Budget Office of the Federation, accountant-general of the Federation, and the senior special assistant to the president on MDGs – governed the programme. The composition of this high-level committee suggests full commitment on the part of the federal government. OSSAP-MDGs served as the secretariat to the committee. The NCCGS was responsible for taking final decisions on the CGS to LGAs interventions, setting annual budget limits, reviewing technical reports from OSSAP-MDGs on LGA applications and proposing a list of selected projects to federal executive council (FEC) for final approval (OSSAP-MDGs, 2011; SPARC, 2013).

#### **4.1.1 OSSAP-MDGs' bureaucratic capacity and autonomy**

The analysis in this section examines the two distinct 'bureaucratic phases' of OSSAP MDGs between 2006 and 2015. As key informants noted, these 'bureaucratic phases' differed greatly in terms of capacity and autonomy.<sup>17</sup> According to a senior government official who worked at OSSAP-MDGs '...when you look at even the two persons who were heading OSSAP-MDGs, in terms of capacity to engage with the process and the MDGs, the difference is clear...'.<sup>18</sup>

The first OSSAP-MDGs' phase (2006-2011) commenced soon after the Paris Club agreement and was tasked with operationalising the processes and programmes for MDGs achievement in Nigeria.<sup>19</sup> Amina Mohammed was appointed as the SSAP-MDGs to provide leadership in the overall implementation of the DRG. There is considerable evidence that this appointment was based on merit, given her exceptionally strong track record (SPARC, 2013; NL3, 22/01/2016). During this phase, the CGS to LGAs was designed and institutionalised following the earlier MDG interventions by MDAs and their disappointing outcomes.<sup>20</sup> It also involved OSSAP-MDGs securing the 'commitment' of political elites and mobilising the organisational capacity to effectively implement the scheme. OSSAP-MDGs operated quite differently from typical civil service establishments in Nigeria and sought the support of technical partners, such as UNDP, DFID SPARC and the Earth Institute, to rapidly strengthen its capacity.<sup>21</sup>

OSSAP-MDGs' decision to recruit TAs and ZTOs on merit provides clear evidence of it strengthening internal forms of bureaucratic capacity. Contrary to core civil service practice, OSSAP-MDGs directly engaged two private recruitment agencies, through a

<sup>16</sup> NL1, 31 December 2015; NL2, 10 February 2016; NL5, 14 January 2016

<sup>17</sup> NL10, 22 April 2016; NL7, 10 February 2017.

<sup>18</sup> NL3, 22 January 2016.

<sup>19</sup> NL1, 31 December 2017.

<sup>20</sup> NL2, 10 February 2016.

<sup>21</sup> NL3, 22/01/2016; NL6, 19 January 2016.

competitive bidding process, to advertise and shortlist candidates for the TA posts.<sup>22</sup> Following shortlisting by the private firms, OSSAP-MDGs conducted the final interviews and made the appointments. A well-placed key informant observed:

‘...it was a transparent process of recruitment when we were to recruit 113 TAs. An advert was done in three national dailies... there was computer-based exams in the different geo-political zones in the country and then, based on the computer exams results, we picked the best five in every state and then we did the oral interview to pick the best three’.<sup>23</sup>

In an environment usually riddled with ‘nepotism’, this would not have been possible without the high degree of autonomy exhibited by Amina Mohammed. The selected TAs were then trained and provided with essential equipment (project vehicle, laptop, GPS device, etc.) to enable them to effectively support the pilot LGAs.<sup>24</sup> These TAs were also provided with the autonomy needed to work in rural LGAs to implement a national-level initiative. The recruitment, preparatory efforts and initial implementation of the scheme indicate a high degree of organisational capacity and commitment to achieving results. However, with the change in the country’s political leadership following the 2011 general elections, Amina Mohammed was replaced by Precious Gbeneol as SSAP-MDGs in August 2011. This marked the beginning of the second bureaucratic phase, which was associated with a dramatic reduction in elite commitment to the scheme and reduced efforts to improve capacity.<sup>25</sup>

The appointment of a new SSAP-MDGs was made directly by President Jonathan. This replacement occurred despite the publicly acknowledged outstanding performance of Amina Mohammed (interviewee<sup>26</sup>; SPARC, 2013). A comparison of the credentials of the two SSAP-MDGs, in terms of qualifications, previous experience, track record and reputation, clearly indicates that this appointment was not based on merit, but on political considerations, including ethnicity. One key informant was emphatic in criticising President Jonathan’s appointee: ‘...I am not afraid to say these things... it became a South–South affair, where you bring people from South region and say “OK this is our turn, lets empower you,” and things like that...’.<sup>27</sup> Other key informants separately raised this concern and noted that the capacity of OSSAP-MDGs was greatly weakened by the leadership change and the events that followed.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> NL1, 31 December 2015; NL8, 11 January 2016.

<sup>23</sup> NL3, 22 January 2016.

<sup>24</sup> NL5, 14 January 2016; NL7, 10 February 2016

<sup>25</sup> NL8, 11 January 2016; NL10, 22 April 2017

<sup>26</sup> NL5, 14 January 2016.

<sup>27</sup> NL3, 22 January 2016.

<sup>28</sup> NL2, 10 February 2016; NL5, 14 January 2016; NL11, 7 February 2016.

For example, immediately after the appointment of the new SSAP-MDGs, the existing OSSAP-MDGs' senior personnel were completely changed.<sup>29</sup> New appointments were made to strategic positions within OSSAP-MDGs, and at least six core civil servants whose capacities had been built specifically for the implementation of the CGS to LGAs were redeployed outside of the OSSAP-MDGs.<sup>30</sup> One key informant reported that: '...these key people were unjustly removed...'.<sup>31</sup> Relatedly, all the TAs were immediately called back to headquarters and required to hand over project vehicles until 'administrative checks' had been carried out. Although the implementation of the scheme continued, these immediate actions were said to have undermined the pre-existing implementation capacity of the CGS to LGAs<sup>32</sup> as, for example, TAs could no longer make field visits to schools and health centres.

Key informants converged in their overall assessment of the two OSSAP-MDGs leaders in terms of their capacity and commitment to the reform initiatives. One senior OSSAP-MDGs official's observation reflects the broader responses received from many interviewees:

'I think both Amina [first SSAP-MDGs] and Precious [second SSAP-MDGs] brought in two different styles of leadership and management. The first regime [phase], may be because the tempo was very high, they came in with lots of ideas and drive to deliver on the programme ...all the tools were designed and developed then. But with the second regime [phase] and the set of leadership that came with it, I think the drive then was a sort of end-game strategy...the second regime was highly politicised without mincing words. The first regime tried to follow due process as stipulated in the CGS *Implementation Manual* and a lot of governance structures were put in place. But, due to the change in leadership and the subsequent redeployment of new set of people, the whole [implementation] process was distorted... Honestly, the second regime [phase] was more like experimenting and that led to the hijacking of the entire process'.<sup>33</sup>

Another key informant observed:

'...what is fundamental to note is the second leadership didn't discard any of the processes that were put in place, but I think it was heavily influenced by politics. This didn't allow them [TAs and ZTOs] to technically enhance the processes that they met, even if they wanted to because there were all sorts of interests involved. And those interests

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<sup>29</sup> NL9, 05 February 2016; NL6, 19 January 2016

<sup>30</sup> NL5, 14 January 2016.

<sup>31</sup> NL9, 05 February 2016.

<sup>32</sup> NL9, 05 February 2016; NL5, 14 January 2016

<sup>33</sup> NL7, 10 February 2016.

sort of overtook sometimes the need to be transparent about the ways the funds were distributed.<sup>34</sup>

Table 2 summarises the ways in which bureaucratic capacity and autonomy declined over OSSAP-MDGs' two phases. While the first phase (2006-2011) was reported to have enjoyed a significant degree of autonomy from political influence, that was not the case with the second phase (2011-2015), which was characterised by high-level politicisation of bureaucratic appointments.<sup>35</sup> Politicians, especially members of parliament and cabinet ministers, were reported to have directly influenced the appointments of new TAs and other positions (ibid). The change in the scheme's bureaucratic leadership and key personnel led to the loss of institutional memory needed for effective implementation (interviewee<sup>36</sup>; SPARC, 2013). Political interference in OSSAP-MDGs' management after 2011 led to much lower autonomy, which further weakened implementation. The extent to which higher capacity translates into effective policy implementation is often a function of commitment (Routley, 2012). We examine elite commitment to the scheme's implementation in the next section.

**Table 2: Summary of OSSAP-MDGs' bureaucratic capacity and autonomy (2006-2015)**

	<b>Phase 1 (2006-2011)</b>	<b>Phase 2 (2011-2015)</b>
<b>Bureaucratic capacity</b>	High – meritocratic recruitment and highly skilled technocrats	High initially, but weakened through patronage appointments
<b>Bureaucratic autonomy</b>	High degree of autonomy from inception and sustained	Low from inception, due to high-level political interference

Source: Yusuf (2017), Table 5.4

#### **4.1.2 Elite commitment to the CGS to LGAs schemes**

The original leadership team of OSSAP-MDGs, and its charismatic head, Amina Mohammed, conceived the idea of the scheme and designed the institutional framework for its implementation. They skillfully enlisted the support of political elites at the sub-national level (state governors) and mobilised the support of development partners. How this played out in relation to key dimensions of commitment is examined below (Table 3 provides a summary).

##### **Locus of initiative**

With respect to the locus of initiative in reform implementation, the degree to which OSSAP-MDGs' bureaucrats took initiatives to ensure the successful implementation

<sup>34</sup> NL5, 14 January 2016.

<sup>35</sup> NL3, 22 January 2016; NL9, 5 February 2016

<sup>36</sup> NL1, 31 December 2015.

**Table 3: Summary of indicators of commitment at OSSAP-MDGs (2006-2015)**

<b>Indicators of commitment</b>	<b>Phase 1 (2006-2011)</b>	<b>Phase 2 (2011-2015)</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
<b>Locus of initiative</b>	Very high, and sustained	Medium, but weakened, due to high staff turnover	Use of technology; development of manuals; establishment of NMIS
<b>Continuity of effort</b>	Very high, with effective application of resources	High, but resources thinly distributed to cover additional LGAs	Effective deployment of human and financial resources
<b>Mobilisation of support</b>	Strong and sustained	Weak and intermittent	Engagement with development partners and non-state actors
<b>Degree of analytical rigour</b>	High and sustained	Medium, continued with needs assessment only	In-depth technical analysis of context; use of robust data; development of 'gap-maps'
<b>Application of credible sanctions</b>	Medium, strong on positive sanctions	Low, weak application of positive and negative sanctions	Recognition of positive actions by individuals or institutions; negative sanctions for non-compliance
<b>Overall assessment</b>	Very high political and bureaucratic elite commitment and sustained	Medium commitment weakened over that time, due to patronage politics	See Section 4.1

Source: Yusuf (2017), Table 5.5 .

of the scheme (Brinkerhoff, 2000), OSSAP-MDGs' leadership demonstrated genuine commitment to the design and implementation of the CGS to LGAs in at least four ways. First, the idea of the scheme originated from the first SSAP-MDGs (Mohammed) following extensive consultations.<sup>37</sup> The carefully crafted tactic of co-opting and countering the state governors at the inception of the scheme ensured its successful start-up, as it was able to escape the control of federal MDAs. Second, the effective use of technology permitted OSSAP-MDGs to roll out the scheme simultaneously across the country. The deployment of VSAT Network Solutions to 156 locations across the country to support the implementation of the CGS to LGAs for the first two years exemplified this (SPARC, 2013; OSSAP-MDGS, 2011). Third, the development of the *CGS Implementation Manual* and guidelines ensured that roles and responsibilities were clearly spelt out between the federal and sub-national

<sup>37</sup> NL1, 31 December 2015; NL2, 10 February 2016.

governments. Fourth, the establishment of the Nigeria MDGs Information System, which provided a platform to capture nationwide baseline facilities data (health, education and water) on all 113 participating LGAs, provides further evidence of bureaucratic commitment. This high degree of initiative declined following the 2011 changes in leadership and the increased role of patronage politics in the allocation of the DRG resources.<sup>38</sup>

### ***Continuity of effort***

Continuity of effort and allocation of resources (Brinkerhoff, 2000; Chopra, 2015), is one of the indicators that best demonstrates elite commitment to programme implementation. In terms of this indicator, the evidence is ambiguous. During the two phases, OSSAP-MDGs' leadership was able to mobilise adequate financial resources to support scheme implementation.<sup>39</sup> Despite an administrative 'logjam' in 2011, following the change in OSSAP-MDGs' leadership, the implementation of the scheme accelerated with the goal to cover all the 774 LGAs in the country.<sup>40</sup> Some 148 LGAs were added to the scheme in 2012; 210 LGAs in 2013; and 77 LGAs in 2014 (OSSAP-MDGs, 2014a). By 2015, 548 LGAs had benefited from the scheme. However, it must be noted that this expansion was contrary to the initial plan to concentrate the scheme's resources on the poorest 113 LGAs.<sup>41</sup>

The political pressure from MPs to cover all LGAs led to the spreading of CGS to LGAs resources very thinly. Average CGS to LGAs expenditure per LGA fell from ₦200 million in 2011 to just ₦28 million in 2014 (Figure 1). This undermined the potential poverty-reduction impact of the scheme and raised its administrative costs. Arguably, if the incremental resources had been channelled to the poorest 113 LGAs, much more impact would have been achieved, because of their greater need and lower unit costs. Our data show that resource-rich/low poverty urban LGAs benefited from CGS resources (meant to reduce extreme rural poverty) during the second phase of the scheme.

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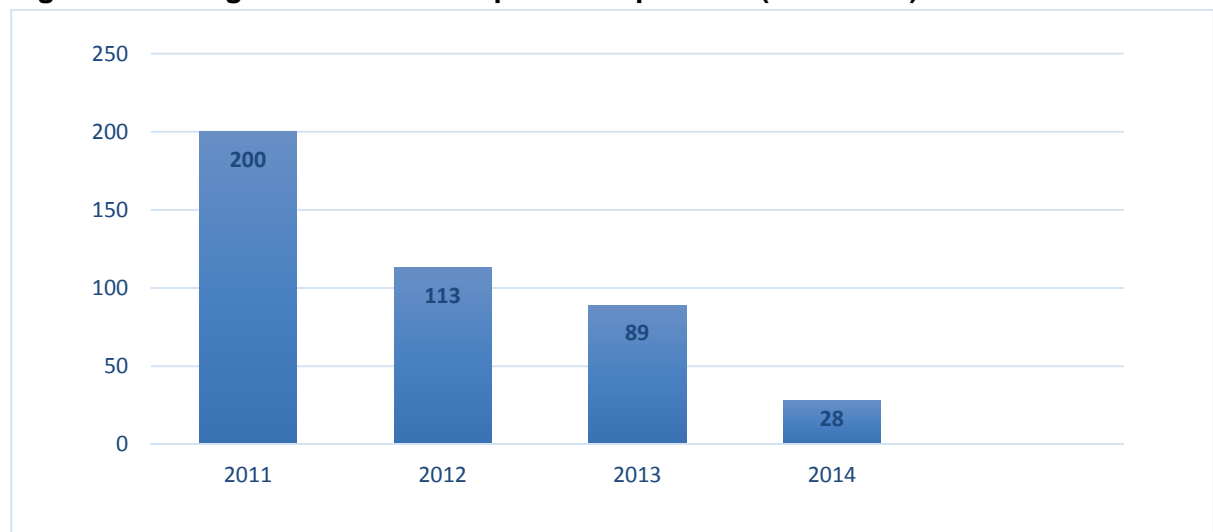
<sup>38</sup> NL3, 22 January 2016; NL8, 11 January 2016.

<sup>39</sup> NL5, 14 January 2016; NL4, 20 January 2016.

<sup>40</sup> NL4, 20 January 2016.

<sup>41</sup> NL1, 31 December 2015; NL11, 7 February 2016.

**Figure 1: Average CGS to LGAs expenditure per LGA (2011-2014) NGN' million**



Source: Yusuf (2017).

### ***Mobilisation of support***

In terms of the willingness and ability of the reform agency to identify and marshal support for implementation of a particular policy (Brinkerhoff, 2000), OSSAP-MDGs successfully mobilised political and bureaucratic elites, key development partners, academia and the wider civil society in support of the scheme (OSSAP-MDGs, 2011; interviewees<sup>42</sup>). This is evident in the way the scheme received the approval of federal legislators, the buy-in of state governors and LGA chairmen, support from federal bureaucrats and the backing of donor agencies (SPARC, 2013; interviewees<sup>43</sup>). Nevertheless, key informants observed that the level of mobilisation was much stronger in phase 1 than in phase 2.<sup>44</sup>

### ***Degree of analytical rigour***

In terms of the degree of analytical rigour – the degree to which policy actors undertake an in-depth examination of the policy environment and use that analysis to design a technically adequate and politically feasible reform programme (Brinkerhoff, 2000) – OSSAP-MDGs displayed deep commitment in the initial design and implementation of the CGS to LGAs scheme. For example, OSSAP-MDGs officials utilised the most robust data available for the identification of the poorest LGAs and the analysis of implementation contexts (OSSAP-MDGs, 2011; SPARC, 2013). In the development of the scheme's implementation guidelines, to deal with institutions and behaviours that promote or impede service delivery (Brinkerhoff, 2000), there is clear evidence of analytical rigour. OSSAP-MDGs' bureaucrats commissioned high-quality baseline studies and needs assessment exercises to produce 'gap maps' for all 113 initial LGAs. Subsequently, these baselines were used by LGAs for MDGs-based planning (OSSAP-MDGs, 2014a; interviewees<sup>45</sup>). Annually, OSSAP-MDGs commissioned 'independent monitoring and assessment reports', carried out by

<sup>42</sup> NL5, 14 January 2016; NL6, 19 January 2016.

<sup>43</sup> NL6, 19 January 2016; NL2, 10 February 2016; NL5, 14 January 2016.

<sup>44</sup> NL3, 22 January 2016.

<sup>45</sup> NL8, 11 January 2016; ML1, 15 March 2016.



independent consultants and representatives of its development partners, such as DFID. This evidence suggests the pursuit and achievement of relatively high levels of analytical rigour on the part of OSSAP-MDGs, especially in phase 1.

### ***Application of credible sanctions***

In relation to the application of credible sanctions – the openness of policy actors to identify incentives and apply both positive and negative sanctions to delivery agencies (Brinkerhoff, 2000) – OSSAP-MDGs made little or no progress during both phases of scheme implementation (OSSAP-MDGs, 2014c). In the CGS to LGAs *Implementation Manual*, procedures to be followed by the participating LGAs are clearly spelt out, as are the implications of ‘non-compliance’ (OSSAP-MDGs, 2011; 2014a). Evidence from fieldwork showed that the requirement to submit an ‘MDGs-compliant local development plan’, as a pre-requisite for accessing funds, was rarely met by most LGAs. For example, in Mashi LGA, no such plan was prepared.<sup>46</sup> Thus, there was a seeming lack of credible sanctions from OSSAP-MDGs to non-compliant LGAs across the country. Relatedly, no mechanism could be identified that rewarded individual bureaucrats or LGAs for compliance with mandatory procedures. There is no evidence that OSSAP-MDGs penalised any deviant case, or rewarded positive behaviour, during scheme implementation. Indeed, an ‘independent report’ identified lack of sanctions against non-compliant LGAs as a scheme weakness (OSSAP-MDGs, 2014c: 586).

## **4.2 CGS to LGAs at the sub-national level**

Case studies of two LGAs provide a fuller understanding of the CGS to LGAs implementation at the local level. Guri LGA, in Jigawa state, was purposely selected to illustrate high-quality implementation cases. Mashi LGA, in Katsina state, was selected as an example of low-quality implementation (OSSAP-MDGs, 2014c; interviewee<sup>47</sup>). Both Guri and Mashi LGAs are rural and located in states with similar political and socio-economic contexts (Table 4) and agro-ecological environments. Both LGAs are in the north-western geopolitical zone, where poverty is more pronounced (NBS, 2010) and both LGAs were among the scheme’s original 113 LGAs. This approach enables careful and detailed comparison of the factors that shape elite commitment (or lack of commitment) and state capacity.

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<sup>46</sup> NL3, 22 January 2016; NL10, 22 April 2016; ML1, 15 March 2016.

<sup>47</sup> NL7, 10 February 2016.

**Table 4: Key characteristics of Guri and Mashi LGAs**

	<b>Guri LGA</b>	<b>Mashi LGA</b>
Land area in km <sup>2</sup>	1, 060	905
Population (2006)	115,018	173, 134
Pupil–teacher ratio (2014)	46 (40 national average)	74 (40 national average)
Total no. of public primary schools (2014)	62 (80 national average)	61 (80 national average)
Total no. of public primary health facilities	10 (28 national average)	44 (28 national average)
Total no. of medical personnel (2014)	53	210
Political party in power (2007-2015)	PDP	PDP

Source: Authors, based on Guri LGA (2016); Mashi LGA (2016); NBS (2010 and 2016).

#### **4.2.1 Guri and Mashi LGAs: Contrasting elite commitment to the CGS to LGAs**

##### **Locus of initiative**

In both Guri and Mashi LGAs, political and bureaucratic elites responded positively to scheme implementation and took initiatives to adapt to its implementation guidelines.<sup>48</sup> For example, political and bureaucratic leaders in Guri LGA made context-relevant changes to local service delivery processes and provided satisfactory feedback to OSSAP-MDGs.<sup>49</sup> Significant LGA level instructions and documentation were circulated across Guri LGA and communities through departmental memos and circulars supporting the scheme's implementation.<sup>50</sup> In Mashi LGA, the level of initiative was weakened by high turnover of political and bureaucratic leaders and the 'micro-management' of the scheme by the state government (discussed later in this section).

##### **Continuity of effort**

In both LGAs, political leaders at the LGA level demonstrated continuity of effort and resource allocation by providing annual counterpart funding and the human resources needed to implement the scheme.<sup>51</sup> Both Guri and Mashi LGAs established functioning bank accounts dedicated for scheme implementation. These local operations accounts were funded by the LGAs to support administrative costs – such as arranging meetings, training programmes, and field visits/monitoring, as well as stipends for personnel supporting the scheme's implementation. However, while these efforts were sustained in Guri LGA – due to the personal commitment of the LGA chairman and the existence of a development coalition of local political elites,

<sup>48</sup> NL8, 11 January 2016; ML1, 15 March 2016.

<sup>49</sup> NL7, 10 February 2016.

<sup>50</sup> GL2, 23 February 2016.

<sup>51</sup> GL1, 25 February 2016; ML1, 15 March 2016

bureaucrats and community members supporting the scheme<sup>52</sup> – this was not the case in Mashi LGA. At Mashi, the high turnover rate of political and bureaucratic leaders and the state government's interference in appointments and day-to-day management of the scheme reduced scheme performance.<sup>53</sup>

### ***Mobilisation of support***

Both Guri and Mashi LGAs made considerable progress with the internal mobilisation of support from LGA staff. Heads of departments were mobilised, sensitised and motivated to support scheme implementation.<sup>54</sup> However, Guri LGA was much more successful at mobilising community-level support.<sup>55</sup> Fieldwork evidence indicates that senior bureaucrats in Guri LGA made strong and effective personal efforts to achieve community buy-in to the scheme. With the support of traditional leaders, the LGA leadership conducted sensitisation programmes and outreach activities across the LGA. By contrast, only a few sensitisation activities were reported in Mashi LGA.<sup>56</sup> In both LGAs, there was virtually no engagement with formal civil society organisations (CSOs) as, in both states, CSOs are almost exclusively urban.

### ***Degree of analytical rigour***

In terms of the degree of analytical rigour, both LGAs relied on OSSAP-MDGs' baseline and needs assessment exercises to understand the scheme's implementation context. This is mainly because the scheme was driven by the federal government, which sought uniformity in data collection (OSSAP-MDGs, 2011). However, both LGAs provided the local manpower and logistics support for the baseline and needs assessment exercises. Guri LGA ranked higher than Mashi LGA in terms of timely identification of problems and providing solutions.<sup>57</sup> and Guri LGA's LEEDS strategy (a comprehensive medium-term plan) ensured that its annual development plans were high quality.

### ***Application of credible sanctions***

Guri LGA performed better than Mashi in terms of using 'sticks and carrots' to enhance performance. Periodic pronouncements by the Guri LGA chairman about the need for staff 'integrity', encouraged bureaucrats to commit fully to the scheme's implementation.<sup>58</sup> Related demands for strict compliance were extended to contractors and service providers, and defaulting contractors were sanctioned.<sup>59</sup> Communities that supported the scheme's implementation were rewarded with additional inputs and projects. However, positive contributions by individual LGA bureaucrats were not singled out for reward, nor were sanctions meted against underperforming officials. At Mashi, there was a seeming absence of positive or negative sanctions relating to scheme implementation. Between 2011 and 2015,

<sup>52</sup> GL6, 04 March 2016; Guri FGD, 27 February 2016.

<sup>53</sup> ML1, 15 March 2016; ML5, 25 March 2016.

<sup>54</sup> GL2, 24 February 2016; ML2, 24 March 2016

<sup>55</sup> GL6, 4 March 2016.

<sup>56</sup> Bamle FGD, 24 March 2016; Zabaro FGD, 26 March 2016.

<sup>57</sup> NL2, 10 February 2016; NL7, 10 February 2016.

<sup>58</sup> GL4, 4 March 2016.

<sup>59</sup> GL6, 4 March 2016; Lafiya FGD, 28 February 2016.

Mashi LGA had three 'interim administrators' and high turnover of civil servants, which negatively affected overall performance (OSSAP-MDGs, 2014a).

**Summary**

In terms of indicators of commitment, (Brinkerhoff, 2000), Guri LGA demonstrated a much stronger performance than Mashi LGA (Table 5). In later sections we examine why this was the case.

**Table 5: Summary of indicators of elite commitment at local level in Guri and Mashi LGAs (2011-2015)**

Indicators of commitment		Guri LGA	Mashi LGA
<b>Locus of initiative</b>	Bureaucratic initiative	Very high, and sustained	Medium, but not sustained, due to high staff turnover
	Political elites support	Very high	Low
	Feedback to OSSAP-MDGs	Medium	Low
<b>Continuity of effort</b>	Provision of financial resources	Strong, and continuous at the LGA level	Strong, but from state level
	Provision of human resources	Strong, and efforts undertaken for the long term	Weak and one-off efforts
	Monitoring of impacts of efforts	Strong, planning document in place	Weak, absence of guiding document
<b>Mobilisation of support</b>	Internal mobilisation/consultation within the LGA	Strong, and ongoing	Weak
	From non-state actors	Strong with community members	Weak with community members
	From development partners	Weak, absence of local development partners	Weak, absence of local development partners
<b>Degree of analytical rigour</b>	In-depth technical analysis of context	Medium quality, analysis and needs assessments conducted by OSSAP-MDGs	Low, analysis and needs assessments conducted by OSSAP-MDGs

	Problem identification and solving	Medium and ongoing	Low
	Adjustment in governance structure	High, all governance systems operating at the LGA level	Low, governance systems operating at the state level, but not at LGA level
<b>Application of credible sanctions</b>	Recognition of positive actions	Strong application, communities recognised and rewarded	None
	Negative sanctions for service providers	Strong, service providers sanctioned for underperformance	None
	Negative sanctions for LGA bureaucrats	None	None
<b>Assessment of overall commitment</b>		High level of LGA political and bureaucratic elites' commitment from inception and sustained	Initial bureaucratic elite commitment, but this decreased over time, due to lack of sustained political elites' commitment and bureaucratic turnover

Source: Yusuf (2017), Table 6.2.

#### **4.2.2 Guri and Mashi LGAs: State government involvement in CGS to LGAs**

State governments' formal involvement in scheme procurement processes, through their 'coordination' role for the project support unit (PSU), meant that state governors could engage with scheme implementation, albeit to varying degrees.<sup>60</sup> At Guri and Mashi LGAs, state governments were deeply involved in managing the CGS to LGAs procurement processes. In Jigawa the state government oversaw Guri LGA's management of procurement. By contrast, in Katsina the state government hijacked the entire process at Mashi LGA to dispense patronage by awarding contracts to political associates.<sup>61</sup> Key informants directly involved in CGS to LGA procurement and implementation described these processes.

On Guri LGA:

'This is where we had problem honestly... We were not involved in the process as stipulated in the [CGS to LGAs] implementation guidelines. This is precisely where things went wrong, as we only saw contractors coming to inform us about their plans to commence work. But, despite this, we were able to hold the contractors accountable here, as we provided regular supervision of the ongoing projects... Maybe the state government feels strongly that if LGAs are allowed to handle the procurement, might divert resources to other uses....'<sup>62</sup>

'During the bidding process, the relevant LGA officials and the technical assistant are invited to take part at the state level. At the successful completion of the exercise, successful contractors will be sent to us for the necessary documentation, including the drafting of the contractual agreement.'<sup>63</sup>

Typical of what national-level officials observed about Guri LGA:

'[political elite] commitment differ[s] from state to state... what I know for example in Jigawa state, right from 2011 till 2015, the political will was excellent. The state governor allowed the focal person, the CGS assistant [technical assistant] and the ZTO [zonal technical officer] to spearhead the implementation of the programme....'<sup>64</sup>

<sup>60</sup> NL2, 10 February 2016; NL10, 22 April 2016.

<sup>61</sup> ML1, 15 March 2016; ML7, 20 March 2016.

<sup>62</sup> GL1, 25 February 2016.

<sup>63</sup> GL4, 4 March 2016.

<sup>64</sup> NL7, 10 February 2016.

Accounts about Mashi LGA were quite different:

‘Actually, the way it was done in Katsina State was that all the procurement activities... were handled at the MDGs state office headed by the MDG focal person ...it was the state focal person that controls the funds and by extension the state governor, who appointed the focal person...And, as you know, the governor controls all the funds of the LGAs. So, you can say the governor controlled 50 percent of the money [CGS to LGAs] while the MDG office [OSSAP-MDGs] controlled the other 50 percent. But once Abuja [OSSAP-MDGs] paid their 50 percent into the account, all the monies became under the control of the state governor.’<sup>65</sup>

A key informant directly involved in the procurement process, elaborated further:

‘...to be totally honest with you, the contractors that eventually got the jobs were handpicked by the state governor and were his political associates...At completion, the LGA treasurer is asked to prepare the necessary documentation and payments eventually made. So, in terms of the control of funds, we didn’t have any...funds were controlled by the state governor through the MDG state office. This was the situation in Mashi LGA and Katsina state generally.’<sup>66</sup>

Similar observations were reported by senior LGA officials and community members at Mashi.<sup>67</sup> State government officials justified their intervention in procurement because of ‘lack of capacity’ at the LGA level and the need to ensure full compliance with state procurement laws. One senior state government official reminisced:

‘...the state office [PSU] served as the coordinating unit for all the participating local governments in the state. In doing this, the office supported the capacity of the LGAs to implement the [CGS to LGAs] interventions and that includes full compliance with due process in procurement....’<sup>68</sup>

This statement is unconvincing, for three reasons. First, there is evidence of capacity for procurement at the LGA level. Indeed, that is partly what the federal government set out to achieve with the CGS to LGAs scheme, by strengthening the capacity of LGAs to improve service delivery. The technical assistants (TAs) were to work closely with LGA officials to strengthen this capacity. Second, the federal government

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<sup>65</sup> ML1, 15 March 2016.

<sup>66</sup> ML1, 15 March 2016.

<sup>67</sup> ML2, 24 March 2016; ML5, 25 March 2016; ML7, 20 March 2016; Marke FGD, 26 March 2016.

<sup>68</sup> NL10, 22 April 2016.



required all participating LGAs to comply fully with its Public Procurement Act (2007) for goods and services under the scheme. Third, evidence from key informants did not support the claim of full compliance with stipulated procurement processes at the state level.

Clearly, state governments had significant influence over the CGS to LGAs scheme at both LGAs. While there is evidence that the active 'agency' of local political elites in Guri LGA helped ensure that contractors met contractual requirements, there appeared to be a complete absence of oversight by local elites at Mashi LGA. Most CGS to LGAs scheme's projects in Guri LGA were reported to have been successfully executed by contractors and service providers, due to the joint efforts of local elites and communities. Jigawa state's institutions and the 'reform minded' state governor ensured that the PSU and the participating LGAs worked closely to implement CGS to LGAs projects relatively free from political interference.<sup>69</sup>

The informal institutional arrangements in Katsina state differed greatly from Jigawa and meant that the governor was firmly in control of scheme resources. The state governor appointed a full-time politician, not a civil servant, to head the PSU and located the PSU directly under his office. This facilitated the dispensing of patronage in the form of contracts to associates and many CGS to LGAs projects at Mashi were reported (by local officials and community members) to have been executed in substandard manner.<sup>70</sup>

#### **4.2.3 The CGS to LGAs: Strengthening LGA bureaucratic capacity?**

The scheme sought to raise the capacities of local governments to deliver basic services to poor people. This was to be achieved by the deployment of TAs and ZTOs working closely with political and bureaucratic elites at the LGA level. TAs and ZTOs were to guide LGAs in the conduct of baseline studies, needs assessments and the development of LGA local development plans (OSSAP-MDGs, 2011; interview<sup>71</sup>). Relatedly, key LGA bureaucrats, mostly heads of departments directly involved in scheme implementation, undertook capacity-building programmes.<sup>72</sup> There is significant evidence that the CGS to LGAs scheme strengthened implementation capacity at the sub-national level, and a significant number of CGS to LGAs projects were executed effectively in primary healthcare, primary education, and water and sanitation (OSSAP-MDGs, 2014c).

However, the outcomes at different LGAs differed markedly, as illustrated by case studies. The raised implementation capacity initially built by the scheme was not sustained, not least because of the high turnover of staff.<sup>73</sup> At the coalface of service delivery in primary healthcare, primary education outcomes at Mashi were poor because of the shortage of front-line staff. Qualified healthcare workers and primary

<sup>69</sup> NL8, 11 January 2016.

<sup>70</sup> ML1, 15 March 2016; Killago FGD, 25 March 2016; Killago FGD, 25 March 2016.

<sup>71</sup> NL7, 10 February 2016.

<sup>72</sup> GL2, 23 February 2016; ML3, 24 March 2016.

<sup>73</sup> ML1, 15 March 2016; ML2, 24 March 2016.

school teachers were in short supply and the existing workers lacked the capacity to effectively deliver services (Awofeso, 2010; Alaba, 2010). In Nigeria, the hiring and training of front-line health workers and primary school teachers is the constitutional responsibility of the state and local governments. The attempt by OSSAP-MDGs to use federal agencies, such as the National Teachers Institute, to address these challenges was unsuccessful, particularly at Mashi, where the primary school pupil-teacher ratio worsened during scheme implementation (Table 6).

**Table 6: Primary education statistics for Guri and Mashi LGAs**

Academic session	LGA	Total enrolment	No. of teachers	Pupil-teacher ratio
2015/16	Guri	13,344	356	1:37
	Mashi	42,648	595	1:72
	<b>National average</b>			1:40*
2014/15	Guri	13,106	360	1:36
	Mashi	43,275	623	1:69
2013/14	Guri	10,002	363	1:27
	Mashi	42,217	623	1:68
2012/13	Guri	8,441	325	1:26
	Mashi	41,001	640	1:64
2011/12	Guri	8,492	290	1:29
	Mashi	36,834	641	1:57
2010/11	Guri	7,894	294	1:27
	Mashi	35,356	662	1:53

*Source:* Authors' compilation, based on Guri LGA Education Authority and Mashi LGA Education Authority records and National Bureau of Statistics (2015).

For primary healthcare, the number of trained health workers declined in both Guri and Mashi LGAs between 2011 and 2015 (Table 7) due to retirement, death and an embargo on new recruitment.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, political elites in both LGAs prioritised publicly visible interventions involving contracts, such as the construction of health centres and schools, rather than less visible activities, such as the hiring and training of staff. Very limited resources were allocated to raising the number and quality of health workers, which was essential for improved service delivery. The innovative use of para-professional field staff in Guri LGA, village health workers to catalyse demand for primary healthcare at community level, was a useful stopgap in the absence of health personnel recruitment, but it could not substitute for a lack of doctors and nurses (Table 7).

<sup>74</sup> GL4, 04 March 2016; GL7, 23 February 2016; ML2, 25 March 2016; ML3, 24 March 2016.

**Table 7: Trained primary healthcare staff, Guri and Mashi LGAs**

Key indicator	LGA	2011	2015	% change
Staff strength	Guri	62	53	-14.5%
	Mashi	218	210	-3.7%

*Source:* Authors' compilation, based on Guri LGA PHC Department and Mashi LGA PHC Department records.

## 5. Conclusions

This paper illustrates the challenges faced by well resourced and innovative attempts to reform the delivery of basic services in Nigeria. It shows that service delivery reforms can be designed and implemented in a manner that is both technically competent and politically smart, in some contexts, to partially achieve improved development outcomes. Sustaining this, however, requires the continued commitment of political and bureaucratic elites along the service delivery chain. The paper also shows that capacity is closely related to commitment and that these two factors interact to produce positive or negative cycles. However, when elite commitment to development is low, existing bureaucratic capacity is likely to be undermined.

Five key findings arise from this analysis of the CGS to LGAs efforts at service delivery reform:

- (i) The scheme was designed in both a technically competent and politically savvy manner, to partly 'go with the grain' (Levy, 2014) of governance. State-level political elites, specifically the state governors, were to be both 'countered and co-opted', but politics trumped technics in the eventual selection of the 113 pilot LGAs (they were relatively 'poor', but they were not 'the poorest' LGAs) and the potential for programme capture at state level remained high.
- (ii) The initial success achieved by OSSAP-MDGs (2006-2011) was linked to national-level political and bureaucratic leaderships committed to improving service delivery to poor people. The commitment of 'big people' (OSSAP-MDGs leadership involved 'big women' as much as 'big men') derived from personal value positions, but also from the negotiating processes around debt relief and DRG. This raised commitment to achieving the scheme's goals along the implementation chain.
- (iii) The reduction in elite commitment to the scheme implementation at the national level is largely attributable to the change in the country's political leadership in 2011, the associated change in OSSAP-MDGs' leadership and the increased role of patronage politics in the management of all public resources. These changes can be understood in terms of the lower personal levels of commitment to development provided by these new leaders and the fact that these new players were not part of the original DRG deal.

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- (iv) At the sub-national level, the different forms of state government involvement in the implementation of the CGS to LGAs impacted significantly on outcomes, as shown by the Guri and Mashi LGAs case studies. Pre-existing political factors supported or undermined service delivery reforms. Where elite commitment was high, as in the case of Guri LGA, it facilitated the formation of an informal development coalition, which combined the initiative and 'agency' of the communities, with the commitment of the LGA chairman and the state governor.
  - (v) While the CGS to LGAs raised implementation capacity at the LGA and for some service delivery (such as primary healthcare and education), the scheme had little impact on long-term bureaucratic capacity in the case study LGAs. This is largely due to national problems and policies that create an acute shortage of trained, front-line primary healthcare personnel and primary school teachers in rural areas across the country. This constraint was compounded by local- and state-level political elites' prioritisation of allocating funds to physical infrastructure (health clinics and classroom blocks) and material supplies, which enable patronage and bribery, at the expense of 'less visible' expenditures, such as recruiting more and better trained staff.

Nigeria's CGS to LGAs was well resourced and well designed in technical terms; it was also politically smart, as it sought to partly 'go with the grain' of Nigerian institutions, rather than promoting an ideal model. However, the change in the country's political leadership in 2011, and the subsequent increased influence of patronage politics in the allocation of public resources, coupled with contextual factors at the sub-national level (especially the high turnover of service delivery and LGA staff and elite capture of the scheme) undermined service delivery reform.

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## **Appendix: Lists of interviews and focus group discussions conducted**

### **Interviews conducted**

- NL1, 31 December 2015: former head of CGS, OSSAP-MDGs, Abuja.  
NL2, 10 February 2016: former technical assistant to SSAP-MDGs, Abuja.  
NL3, 22 January 2016: former team leader CGS Track, OSSAP-MDGs, Abuja.  
NL4, 20 January 2016: head of CGS unit, OSSAP-MDGs, Abuja.  
NL5, 14 January 2016: senior representative of development partner involved in CGS to LGAs scheme, Abuja.  
NL6, 19 January 2016: senior representative of a development partner involved in CGS to LGAs scheme, Abuja.  
NL7, 10 February 2016: former zonal technical officer, OSSAP-MDGs, Jigawa.  
NL8, 11 January /2016: technical assistant, CGS to LGAs, Abuja.  
NL9, 5 February 2016: technical assistant, CGS to LGAs, Abuja.  
NL10, 22 April 2016: former state MDGs focal person, Abuja.  
NL11, 07 February 2016: senior representative of a development partner involved in CGS to LGAs scheme, via Skype.  
NL12, 14 January 2016: technical officer of a development partner involved in CGS to LGAs scheme, Abuja.  
NL13, 23 January 2016: principal budget officer, Budget Office of the Federation, Abuja.  
NL14, 31 February 2016: former member of the Senate, National Assembly, involved in DRG implementation, Abuja.

- GL1, 25 February 2016: former chairman, Guri LGA.  
GL2, 24 February 2016: director of personnel management, Guri LGA.  
GL3, 25 February 2016: director planning, research and statistics, Guri LGA.  
GL4, 4 March 2016: M&E officer, primary healthcare, Guri LGA.  
GL5, 04 March 2016: village health worker, Guri LGA.  
GL6, 04 March 2016: community leader, Guri LGA.  
GL7, 23 February 2016: local education secretary, Guri LGA.  
GL8, 22 February 2016: secretary, Guri LGA.

- ML1, 15 March 2016: technical assistant, Mashi LGA.  
ML2, 24 March 2016: primary healthcare coordinator, Mashi LGA.  
ML3, 23 March 2016: local education secretary, Mashi LGA.  
ML4, 23 March 2016: water and sanitation coordinator, Mashi LGA.  
ML5, 25 March 2016: secretary, Mashi LGA.  
ML6, 06 April 2016: former LGA chairman/special advisor to the governor, Abuja.  
ML7, 20 March 2016: former council treasurer, Mashi LGA.  
ML8, 30 March 2016: former technical assistant, CGS to LGAs, Abuja.

### **Focus groups conducted**

- Guri FGD, 27 February 2016: focus group, Guri Village, Guri LGA.  
Margadu FGD, 27 February 2016: focus group, Margadu Village, Guri LGA.



Gajiya FGD, 28 February 2016: focus group, Gajiya Village, Guri LGA.  
Lafiya FGD, 28 February 2016: focus group, Lafiya Village, Guri LGA.  
Matara Babba FGD, 1 March 2016: focus group, Matara Village, Guri LGA.  
Bamle FGD, 24 March 2016: focus group, Bamle Village, Mashi LGA.  
Baude FGD, 24 March 2016: focus group, Baude Village, Mashi LGA.  
Killago FGD, 25 March 2016: focus group, Killago Village, Mashi LGA.  
Makau FGD, 25 March 2016: focus group, Makau Village, Mashi LGA.  
Marke FGD, 26 March 2016: focus group, Marke Village, Mashi LGA.  
Zabaro FGD, 27 March 2016: focus group, Zabaro Village, Mashi LGA.

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