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### *The politics of promoting social protection in Zambia*

Kate Pruce<sup>1</sup> and Sam Hickey<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Global Development Institute, The University of Manchester

Email correspondence: [kate.pruce@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:kate.pruce@manchester.ac.uk)

<sup>2</sup>Global Development Institute, The University of Manchester

Email correspondence: [sam.hickey@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:sam.hickey@manchester.ac.uk)

ISBN: 978-1-908749-76-5

email: [esid@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:esid@manchester.ac.uk)

**Effective States and Inclusive Development Research Centre (ESID)**

Global Development Institute, School of Environment, Education and Development,  
The University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL, UK

[www.effective-states.org](http://www.effective-states.org)

## **Abstract**

The rise of the social protection agenda in Zambia over the past few years seems in some ways to fit with mainstream accounts of how welfare states are likely to emerge in developing countries, particularly in terms of the links to elections and pro-poor political parties. However, we demonstrate that this (still incipient) policy shift flows more directly from two alternative sources, namely shifting dynamics within Zambia's political settlement and the promotional efforts of a transnational policy coalition. Adopting a process tracing approach, the paper compares the progress made on social cash transfers and social health insurance in Zambia. We investigate how the interplay of domestic political economy and transnational factors shaped the commitment of government to formulate and deliver the respective policies in the context of competing demands and priorities within the wider distributional regime. Despite some progress made in both policy areas, social protection has not as yet displaced certain interests, ideas and rent-allocation practices that are more deeply embedded within Zambia's political settlement. However, given that it would be politically dangerous to remove social cash transfers from communities that have become used to receiving them, what matters now is the way in which such transfers become integrated within Zambia's distributional regime, including whether they simply deepen its clientelist nature or start to form the basis of a new citizenship-based social contract.

**Keywords:** Zambia, social protection, cash transfers, social health insurance, political settlements, ideas

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## **Abbreviations**

CP	Cooperating partners
CSO	Civil society organisation
DFID	Department for International Development
FISP	Farmer Input Support Programme
FRA	Food Reserve Agency
GRZ	Government of the Republic of Zambia
GTZ	German Development Agency
HDI	Human Development Index
HIPC	Highly indebted poor country
MCDMCH	Ministry of Community Development and Mother and Child Health
MCDSS	Ministry of Community Development and Social Services
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoH	Ministry of Health
MMD	Movement for Multi-party Democracy
MTEF	Medium-term Expenditure Framework
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PF	Patriotic Front
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PWAS	Public Welfare Assistance Scheme
RCT	Randomised control trial
SCT	Social cash transfer
SHI	Social health insurance
SPEP	Social Protection Expansion Programme
SP-SAG	Sector Advisory Group on Social Protection
UNIP	United National Independence Party
WHO	World Health Organisation

## **1. Introduction**

In 2013, the president of Zambia announced that there would be a 700 percent increase in the budget for what was then a pilot social cash transfer programme. The move took everyone by surprise, including the coalition of international donors, government officials and civil society actors that had been responsible for promoting the pilot programme and who had been calling for its scaling-up amidst support for a broader social protection agenda in Zambia for nearly a decade. Over roughly the same period, barely any progress had been made over other elements of this agenda, including efforts to promote social health insurance. By mid-2016, the social cash transfer scheme had received another boost, with the 2015 budget being further increased by two-thirds, from 180 million kwacha to just over 300 million kwacha, enabling scale-up from 50 to 78 districts by the end of the year. On the other hand, the social health insurance scheme remained firmly on paper, with little strong political backing. Although this scheme is included in the National Social Protection Policy and the National Health Policy, there have been no signs of implementation to date.

In seeking to account for the politics of this uneven commitment to social protection in Zambia, this paper goes beyond the focus on elections and institutions within mainstream accounts of how social protection is likely to emerge in Africa, and draws attention instead to the underlying and dynamics of politics and power that shape elite commitment. Based on these two cases, the paper argues that the nature and strength of the policy coalition, the political importance attached to the policy issue by the ruling coalition, and the ideological fit of proposed social protection programmes are all significant in influencing the levels of capacity and commitment. These insights flow directly from our employment of an alternative conceptual approach to understanding the political economy of social protection in Africa. This framework focused on the nature of the 'political settlement' and interactions with the policy coalitions involved in the redistributive development strategies within which social protection sits (Lavers and Hickey, 2016).<sup>1</sup> The approach is based on an 'adapted political settlements' framework, incorporating insights from the literature on welfare state development and social protection in both industrialised countries and the global South (e.g. Huber and Stephens 2012, Kpessa and Béland, 2013, also Barrientos and Pellissery, 2012; Hickey, 2007; Niño-Zarazúa et al., 2012); on the role of ideas in shaping political behaviour and institutional change (e.g. Schmidt, 2008); and the role of global policy networks (Stone, 2008). The framework is expanded in depth in Lavers and Hickey (2016).

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is part of a comparative project which takes as its starting point the varying levels of interest in and progress on social protection in different African countries, hypothesising that politics holds the key to explaining much of this variation. It examines the interaction between political settlements, policy coalitions and ideas in shaping the adoption and implementation of social assistance and health insurance programmes in five African countries: Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia.

The two contrasting policy cases examined here help illustrate the potential of this approach. In this paper we demonstrate that struggles to promote social protection in Zambia have occurred both within and between policy-level and ruling coalitions. This is taking place in a transnationalised context in which global actors and flows of both resources and ideas are embedded within these coalition-building processes. For example, the efforts of a transnational policy coalition to promote social cash transfers (SCTs) over the 2000s had been heavily contested by officials and politicians, particularly those within the Ministry of Finance. By 2012, they had made some inroads into this opposition, producing a wealth of evidence in support of cash transfers and undertaking extensive informal lobbying. And, by 2011, a new political party was in power, with a mandate to distribute resources to poorer groups. However, our evidence shows that the actual decision to scale-up government support in 2013 flowed not from these enabling factors per se, but from the shifting dynamics of Zambia's political settlement, and in particular a perceived crisis within existing means of distributing resources to rural areas.

The framework also helps explain the relative lack of progress on social health insurance (SHI) in Zambia, despite such a policy having been tabled in the early 1990s. In contrast to cash transfers, SHI has been largely championed by a small team in the Ministry of Health (MoH) and a relatively small donor agency, rather than a broader and well-resourced coalition of more powerful players amongst the donor community in particular. There is also limited support, and in some cases outright opposition, from other key groups that have 'holding power' within Zambia's political settlement, including unions. As currently formulated, the scheme does not fit with the ideas and interests of either key bureaucrats or political actors. Not only does it lack the kind of credible, evidence-based operational plan required to persuade technocrats, but the idea of getting citizens to contribute towards the costs of healthcare also runs against the logic of patron-client politics within Zambia's clientelist political settlement, notably the continued commitment to avoiding user fees.

These narratives, which we set out in more detail below, emerge from our adoption of a process tracing methodology. This starts with the key outcomes to be explained – in this case the political decisions about which forms of social protection should receive support – and seeks to identify the causal mechanisms that led to these outcomes. This involved using a variety of data sources, including documentary analysis and semi-structured key informant interviews with the main stakeholders involved in the process. This included government representatives, both politicians and technocrats (18 interviews); Zambian organisations ranging from trade unions and CSOs to thinktanks and consultancies (10 interviews); representatives of cooperating partners, mainly the multilateral and bilateral donors engaged in the process (13 interviews); and several key individuals who are currently unaffiliated (four interviews), as well as four public speeches. The interviews were conducted during fieldwork undertaken in Zambia in April-May 2015.

The paper now proceeds by outlining the shifting political settlement in Zambia from independence to the present day (section 2). Section 3 then establishes an overview of the SCT and SHI programmes, respectively, while section 4 provides an analytical discussion through the lens of our political settlements framework. Section 5 concludes.

## **2. The political settlement in Zambia**

Zambia's political settlement, understood here as 'the balance of power between contending social groups on which any state is based' (Di John and Putzel 2009: 4), has undergone a series of shifts in the decades since independence. Strongly informed by the legacy of colonial rule, under which projects of state formation and governmentality took shape around the construction of ethno-linguistic groups, the efforts of successive ruling coalitions to enforce a stable set of institutions capable of delivering an acceptable distribution of rents have been influenced by this balance of power (Khan 2010). Colonial rule saw the country divided into five ethno-linguistic groupings: Bemba (43 percent of the population), Nyanja (18 percent), Tonga (including Ila and Lenje, 19 percent), Lozi (8 percent) and the Northwest region (12 percent) (Scarritt, 2006). As Scarritt (2006: 239) notes, 'these linguistic groups were constructed before they were politicised through conflicts within the nationalist movement and post-independence parties', with the Northwest region, where none of the four major lingua francas, predominate 'constructed... in response to the politicisation of the other groups' (ibid.). With no single group able to dominate alone, the politics of forming ruling coalitions in post-colonial Zambia has been shaped by efforts to form coalitions across these groups, with a tendency to seek 'inclusive or over-sized rather than minimum winning coalitions' (Scarritt, 2006: 234).

Following Khan (2010), forming such coalitions involves navigating the balance of power both in horizontal terms, regarding relations between elite factions, and also vertically, regarding the relationship between elites and wider social groups. This section sets out the historical character of the political settlement in Zambia since independence until the current moment, with a focus on the shifting balance of power along these dimensions and the dominant incentives and ideas that have prevailed within different ruling coalitions over this time period. Although this history includes the shift from the single-party tendencies of Kaunda's United National Independence Party (UNIP) to the return of multi-party politics in 1991, our focus on the underlying logics of how ruling coalitions are formed enables the analysis to move beyond the limits of formal institutional analysis in examining the politics of development in Zambia.

### **2.1. Inter-elite relations and coalition building in post-colonial Zambia**

In the first period following independence, the strategy of building inclusive ruling coalitions, the related discourse of 'One Zambia, One Nation', and modernist narratives of development as part of the nationalist, state-building project led by Kaunda (Larmer et al., 2014) helped underpin an often progressive period of economic and social development. Underpinned by high copper prices, the initial

political and development strategy had positive pay-offs in terms of generating stability, a sense of nationhood, and a degree of human development (Noyoo, 2010).

However, the centralisation of power within the presidency and the emergence of a system of neopatrimonialism, both to satisfy the demands of factions and for personal gain, undermined the bureaucratic capacity required to deliver development (Erdmann and Simutanyi, 2003). The inclusive strategy also incurred its own political and economic costs. The work of incorporation involved the establishment of numerous ministerial positions and the nationalisation of several economic enterprises in the late 1960s, primarily as a means of allocating rents between dominant groups (Lindemann, 2011: 1852). The falling prices of copper during the 1970s threw this politics of development into sharp relief: drastic reductions were made to expenditure on social services, the greater proportion of which was spent on personal emoluments, with only 2.3 percent being spent on programme-related expenses in 1980 (Dixon, 1987).

The centrality of the Copperbelt to the extractive strategies of the colonial administration led to both widespread in-migration into the area, which resulted in a more mixed ethnic basis of the population, and the formation of socio-political identities along class rather than ethnic lines. As a result, 'the multi-ethnic Copperbelt gave rise to a broad-based nationalist movement' (Lindemann 2011: 1848) that closely shaped the politics of independence in Zambia. Lindemann (2011) suggests that the use of ethno-linguistic ties as the basis for political inclusion by Kaunda, along with the suppression of dissent, contributed to the exclusion of other types of factions, such as urban and unionised classes. Importantly, it was the excluded leaders and members of these factions that eventually mobilised a coalition that was strong enough to challenge Kaunda's dominance. The major force here was the trade union movement, which, along with businessmen, churches and intellectuals, formed the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD). The MMD mobilised actively for democratic reforms and took power in 1991 (Erdmann and Simutanyi, 2003).

The reintroduction of multi-party politics at this time changed, but did not fully transform how politics works in Zambia. Once in power, successive political parties have sought to cement inclusive coalitions in horizontal terms through allocating key positions within the executive, administration, military and parastatal sector in a balanced way across the main groupings (Lindemann, 2011). This strategy has been highly successful in terms of maintaining stability, although with largely negative implications for development. This sense of being represented at elite level has helped to secure the support of lower-level factions (Scarritt, 2006),<sup>2</sup> with subordinate groups further included through the vertical distribution of rents via public sector employment and agricultural food subsidies in particular. Investment in public spending deemed to be politically important has continued to be prioritised at the expense of social expenditure:

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<sup>2</sup> Quotes Posner (2005: 91) on how people expect representatives of their own ethnic group in power to distribute resources to them (Scarritt 2006: 236).

'The total number of ministries and deputies grew from 54 in 1990 to 67 in 1998 ... This growth ran contrary to functional necessity and economic rationality ... and was solely a response to the political need to preserve a 'tribally-balanced' government. Moreover, the MMD governments struggled hard to avoid cuts in the size of the civil service. This indicates that sufficient scope for patronage was still privileged at the expense of economic considerations. While the civil service as an important bastion of the elite bargain was protected, expenditure cuts were implemented in public investment and social spending, with obvious implications for economic development.' (Lindemann, 2011: 1864).

This strategy reflects the tendency of elites in Zambia to first look across at each other rather than downwards to their followers when it comes to strategies for maintaining power and seeking to influence the distribution of resources (Khan, 2010). There was also an important ideational element to this apparent reluctance to redistribute resources downwards in a systematic way: a survey of Zambia's elite in the first decade of independence found that they tended to emphasise the equality of opportunity over equality of outcome (Scarritt, 2006: 242).

The requirement to forge an inclusive coalition inevitably directs a great deal of energy inwards to managing competing factions within the ruling coalition, thus reducing the level of elite cohesion and focus on development (Levy, 2014). The extension of political space offered by the return of multi-party politics has arguably intensified this by creating a clearer exit option for elites dissatisfied with their status within the ruling coalition. The incentives for dissatisfied elites to leave and form their own challenger parties are further raised by the presidentialist character of the political system in Zambia, whereby the president holds significant personal powers concerning appointments and rents. This creates a strong incentive for internal squabbles over party leadership and succession issues (Scarritt, 2006: 240), and raises the attractiveness for elites of leaving and forming their own party as a basis for running for office. This occurred during Chiluba's push for a third term (Lindemann, 2011: 1860), which saw MMD Minister Michael Sata leave and form his own party, the Patriotic Front (PF) (Scarritt, 2006: 249).<sup>3</sup>

## **2.2. Increased importance of vertical power relations under multi-party politics in Zambia**

Under MMD there was a breakdown of trust within the coalition of economic and social interest groups, partly because unions were side-lined in decision-making (Lindemann, 2011). The ongoing project of economic liberalisation also meant that the productive and organisational basis of all socio-economic groupings was being undermined at the time (Rakner, 2003). With the political loyalties of lower-level

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<sup>3</sup> Which, contrary to earlier history (Scarritt, 2006), proved to be an electorally successful strategy in the end, perhaps as Sata worked out how to mobilise a different kind of coalition based on urban support, as MMD did when they gained power in 1991.

factions now up for grabs within the new political market-place, certain forms of clientelism intensified, including the use of agricultural subsidies (Mason et al., 2013).

The distribution of food subsidies under MMD during the 1990s and 2000s was highly politicised, with universal subsidies in agriculture giving way to more targeted approaches. While ostensibly aimed at cost-cutting, these also enabled government to target such resources politically. The increased vulnerability of the MMD ruling coalition over the 2000s directly shaped the size and targeting of government's agricultural subsidy programmes, such as the Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP) and the Food Reserve Agency (FRA). These include the provision of subsidised inputs, mainly in the form of fertiliser and maize seed. According to Mason et al. (2013: 2) 'The scale of the programs ... has increased dramatically over the last decade, e.g. from 48,000 MT of fertilizer in 2002 to 184,000 MT in 2012', and most of the resources being distributed went to those districts which returned MMD candidates by the largest majorities. Then, just before the September 2011 elections, 'Banda dramatically scaled up FISP from 100,000 MT in 2009/10 to 178,000 MT in 2010/11. The move proved insufficient to secure a victory, however, and Michael Sata (PF) defeated him by nearly seven percentage points' (ibid: 4).

A more populist element to politics also emerged over this time period (Cheeseman and Hinfelaar, 2010), not least in the pursuit of urban constituents. Although there is little evidence that Zambians have historically voted along opposed rural-urban lines, the urban vote has become increasingly crucial to the electoral turnovers (Rakner and Helle, 2012) that help define Zambia's competitive clientelism. When MMD took power in 1991, they gained 95 percent of seats in urban areas, and urban voters were again critical in bringing the Patriotic Front (PF) to power.<sup>4</sup> PF has promoted a distinctive urban-based populist political discourse, championed by Sata's leadership (Larmer and Fraser, 2007). This has appealed to a group that felt disenfranchised by policy shifts under MMD, which came at the expense of urban voters, creating credible challenges in the 2006 and 2008 elections then finally gaining power in 2011, with the PF winning the majority of the urban vote.

PF's sweeping electoral victory appeared to mark a shift within the political and ideational dynamics and tendencies of Zambia's political settlement, more so than the transition from UNIP to MMD in 2001. The social basis of support for PF was derived mainly from the urban working classes and intelligentsia, which led to a leftist policy agenda focused on the labour market: minimum wages, labour relations and being tough on businesses (Rakner and Helle, 2012: 11), amidst broader claims to be pro-poor. The significance of the urban vote for PF has driven a particular form of populism in Zambia, which plays on dissatisfaction amongst mineworkers in particular, and has arguably led to a ruling coalition that is more directly oriented downwards to subordinate groups in vertical terms than its predecessors. It has also broadened Sata's ethnic support base (Cheeseman, Ford and Simutanyi, 2014), as

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<sup>4</sup> <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/internationaldevelopment/2015/01/26/catherine-boone-zambia-presidential-elections-why-is-it-so-hard-to-predict-a-potential-winner/>

PF polled only 3 percent in 2001 when it was considered to be a 'potentially ethnic' Bemba party (Erdmann and Simutanyi, 2003; Scarritt, 2006).

The more democratic elements of the transition that initially flourished, including a vibrant independent media and civil society, have struggled to become institutionalised. Although civil society recorded an historic victory in preventing President Chiluba from amending the constitution in order to allow him to stand for a third term (Gould, 2006), more recent campaigns around the constitution in 2007 and democracy in 2012 have not been successful. The continued predominance of patron-client rather than citizenship-based politics, despite the shift to competitive multi-party elections, has led observers to characterise Zambia's political settlement as 'competitive clientelist' in character, whereby elite fragmentation and electoral incentives tend to result in short-term horizons and the politicisation of the public bureaucracy (Levy, 2014).

Efforts by external actors to promote social protection in Zambia from the early 2000s encountered a challenging context, not only in terms of the political settlement, but also with regards to the country's framing of development in institutional and ideational terms. From 1975 onwards, reform and structural adjustment programmes had promoted the role of market, rather than state, as the mechanism for allocating resources in Zambia (Mhone, 2004). This had reduced the expectations that citizens had of the state, with Zambia's 'welfare regime' reflecting the growing 'externalisation of social provision' (Larmer et al., 2014), with an increased role for a wide range of non-state actors. The 'social protection agenda' was non-existent, although the pressing HIV and AIDS crisis had led government to extend the Public Welfare Assistance Scheme (PWAS) (Harland, 2014). Established in the 1950s, PWAS is an unconditional in-kind transfer with the aim of meeting the basic needs of people unable to support themselves.

Zambia was also highly indebted and under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative signed up to the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) experiment in 2001. Although this provided a window through which donors could start promoting social protection, there was strong opposition from within government to pursuing a redistributive agenda which was at odds with both the 'growth first' approach and underlying ideas around deservingness. For example Hickey et al., (2009: 77) note that:

'as indicated by the views of the Minister of Finance, the prevailing political discourse in Zambia tends to favour the 'productive' segment of the population. This is reflected in a variety of programmes targeted at 'vulnerable but viable' farmers and the productivist, infrastructure-oriented character of Zambia's Fifth National Development Plan.'

Towards the end of the 2000s it was increasingly clear that Zambia's impressive rates of growth of 5-6 percent had not translated into poverty reduction. The number

of people falling below the poverty line remained stubbornly high at 60.5 percent in 2010, with the number in extreme poverty standing at 42 percent (Central Statistical Office, Zambia, 2011); in 2010, headcount poverty was almost 78 percent in rural areas, compared to 27.5 percent in urban areas. The convergence between questions being raised over the growth-first strategy and the ascent to power of the PF in 2011 on a pro-poor agenda raised hopes that Zambia's national development planning would become more focused on poverty reduction, and particularly social protection, given the promise to 'put money in the pockets' of ordinary people.

### **3. Social protection in Zambia**

In June 2014, GRZ published a National Social Protection Policy that encompassed a range of instruments, including a scaled-up social cash transfer programme, a new social health insurance scheme, and proposed reforms to public sector pensions. This umbrella approach was proposed by a cabinet sub-committee chaired by the cabinet secretary and the various stakeholders had little choice but to support it, despite disagreements between the Ministries of Community Development and Health, and their respective co-operating partners, regarding which of their preferred policy instruments should be pursued as a priority.

The rest of this section traces the process through which social cash transfers and social health insurance were promoted as part of a new policy agenda on social protection in Zambia.

#### **3.1. Social cash transfers**

There have been three main phases in the development and promotion of SCTs in Zambia to date: the first involved the introduction by the German Development Agency (GTZ) of a pilot cash transfer scheme in 2003, followed by a concerted effort by donors to form a broader constituency of support behind social protection. Once a scaled-up SCT programme was agreed in 2010, the next phase involved donors building the capacity of GRZ to deliver this alongside continued lobbying and advocacy efforts. Finally, the current phase began in 2013 with the announcement of a 700 percent increase for SCTs in the GRZ budget, from a base of 17.4 million kwacha to 150 million kwacha. This reversed the balance of government and donor contributions and enabled further expansion to 50 districts by the end of 2014. Progressive increase of the SCT budget allocation was confirmed in 2015 and the programme will reach 78 districts in 2016.

##### **3.1.1. Promoting social protection and cash transfers in Zambia**

In 2003, GTZ approached the Ministry of Community Development with the suggestion of a pilot cash transfer scheme. Government had three years earlier relaunched its long-standing PWAS scheme in response to Zambia's HIV and AIDS crisis. The GTZ model was similarly designed to respond to high levels of food poverty and labour-constrained households, exacerbated by the burden of HIV (Schubert, 2005). Despite requests from relevant officials that the pilot scheme be integrated within a scaled-up PWAS, which the then Minister of Finance supported

(ZK1), the project was designed as a separate entity, with GTZ focusing its assistance only on the structures and capacity needed for implementation in a small part of Kalomo district (Harland, 2014). This scheme would go on to generate what one respondent referred to as 'Kalomo mania' for several years (ZK1), while the resources and attention directed to the new national PWAS scheme dwindled (Harland, 2014).

In late 2003, social development advisors from DFID and the World Bank proposed to government that they establish a Sector Advisory Group on Social Protection (SP-SAG), which would be chaired by the Ministry of Community Development and directly inform the PRSP review process. The two agencies were not always well-coordinated, with the Bank focusing on promoting its 'social risk management' approach, whilst DFID chose a consultant to write the strategy paper for the new sector (Hickey et al., 2009). The chapter did make it into what would become the Fifth National Development Plan, and although the numerous programmes listed there received little funding or political attention, social protection had been established on the policy, if not the political, agenda.

DFID funded the extension of the cash transfers, so that by 2007 variants of the Kalomo scheme were operating in parts of five districts, with some 12,000 beneficiary households (Harland, 2014). The Ministry of Community Development were assisted on a day-to-day basis by GTZ in delivery terms (Schubert, 2005), with CARE International and HelpAge also supporting the implementation. In terms of advocacy and policy development, Zambia's adoption of the Joint Assistance Strategy in 2007, informed by Paris Declaration principles concerning harmonisation, saw both GTZ and the Bank leave the social protection sector. This cleared the way for DFID to take a lead alongside like-minded donors, such as UNICEF and Irishaid.

The commitment of the Ministry of Community Development to the social protection agenda was initially limited; both this and its marginal role within GRZ made it very difficult to secure buy-in from more powerful ministries, (Hickey et al., 2009), particularly the Ministry of Finance (ZG9). From 2005 onwards, DFID Zambia started to adopt a more politically-informed approach to building a constituency for social protection, informed in part by their commissioning of a 'drivers of change' study (Barrientos et al., 2005). This strategy had both technical and political elements, from building the evidence-base for social protection through to study tours (including to Kalomo, South Africa, Lesotho, Brazil and Chile) and informal meetings, increasingly targeted at powerful players within the finance ministry and the political elite.

### **3.1.2. *Strengthening and scaling up***

By 2009, DFID had been joined by UNICEF as co-leads of the social protection co-operating partners (CP) group and succeeded in gaining GRZ support for the Social Protection Expansion Programme (SPEP). This included a gradual expansion of SCTs targeting the poorest and most vulnerable households made up of the elderly above the age of 60, children under the age of five, and adults who are chronically ill,

affected by HIV and AIDS, or living with disabilities, to be increasingly funded by GRZ. At the meeting scheduled for signing this agreement, the minister of finance (Dr Situmbeko Musokotwane) was 'very nervous' that DFID were proposing a programme of £32 million over only seven years, after which the responsibility for its continuation would fall to GRZ, and therefore requested that DFID commit for 10 years, which it duly did, to the tune of £38 million (ZC2). This marked a significant shift regarding the Ministry's erstwhile opposition to social protection, as the previous finance minister, N'gandu Magande (2003-08), 'fervently opposed SCTs on personal and financial grounds' (Kabandula and Seekings, 2014: 26). Committed to the trickle-down model of growth, Magande believed that SCTs would encourage dependency (ZG1, ZC12, ZG9), rather than upwards mobility (ZC2). However, when President Mwanawasa passed away in office in 2008 and Rupiah Banda was elected as his replacement in the presidential by-election, the resulting cabinet reshuffle led to Magande's replacement by a less ideological finance minister.

From 2010 onwards, there was a concerted effort to build a stronger evidence-base in support of SCTs. This went beyond the initial evaluations of the Kalomo pilot (see MCDSS and GTZ, 2007; Wietler, 2007), which lacked a control group. Instead it focused on randomised control trial (RCT) evaluations carried out by independent consultancy firms (ZG1), as this approach was considered more politically persuasive: 'they certainly like evidence, Ministers love it, they're all doctors so they love RCTs' (ZC2). According to multiple interviewees, this effort peaked at a high-level workshop, during which the results of both the RCTs and a recent World Bank assessment of SCTs were delivered and discussed with senior civil servants from all key ministries, including finance, with the cabinet secretary chairing. This level of buy-in derived both from the convening power of the World Bank and the more informal, backstage efforts of a senior Zambian consultant hired by DFID to deploy his long-established elite-level networks to generate awareness of and support for social protection in Zambia. These studies enabled the Ministry of Community Development to refute the belief that people would work less and offer clear evidence that the transfers could reduce poverty and contribute to the economy (ZG1). Importantly, the World Bank assessment not only reported favourably on the impact of SCTs in Zambia, but also revealed how badly other programmes, such as agricultural subsidies, were faring in comparison, both in terms of their cost-effectiveness and their success in reaching poor people.

### **3.1.3. Government budget increase for SCTs**

When the Patriotic Front gained power in 2011 on a pro-poor ticket, including a manifesto commitment to rolling out 'social transfers', this raised hopes that social protection would now become a political priority. Nonetheless, the minister of finance's announcement on 11 Oct 2013 that the 2014 budget that would increase GRZ financing for SCTs by 700 percent and that a national social protection policy would be prioritised (Chikwanda, 2013), came 'out of the blue' (ZC2) to proponents of the programme. The commitment exceeded both the co-financing agreement within

the SPEP and the budget request from the Ministry of Community Development for that year, which was only 53 million kwacha (ZG2).

It came about amidst an apparently strong attack by the president on the waste incurred by agricultural subsidies, following a scandal in 2013 concerning massive overspending on the budget lines for the FISP and the FRA (ZC6, ZK2). This crisis led to a public announcement by Sata that resources would be channelled to 'the very poor citizens of our society'<sup>5</sup> and some funds were redirected to the SCT programme, which was framed as a more effective and pro-poor alternative to the subsidies. SCTs were only seen as the solution because the scheme had already been accepted by the finance ministry as a credible means of reaching the poor, and because a degree of capacity existed within government to deliver, through the donor-supported Ministry of Community Development, particularly the Department of Social Welfare and the SCT Unit.

The amount allocated to the SCT programme is still tiny compared to such subsidies.<sup>6</sup> Programmes such as FISP and FRA continue to pull significant resources away from other forms of social protection, with budgeted amounts for FISP actually increasing in 2014-15, despite Sata's rhetoric about reducing agricultural programmes following the 2013 scandal. When the SCT budget flatlined in 2015, there were fears that the scale-up would stall, confirmed by the Medium-term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) for 2015-17, which indicated that the budget for SCTs would remain at ZMW 150 million per year until 2016-17 (Ministry of Finance, 2014). However, these fears have been allayed by renewed government promises to progressively increase the SCT budget allocation supported by the new MTEF for 2016-18, in which the domestically financed contribution to SCTs will be increased to ZMW 350 million by 2018 (Ministry of Finance, 2015).

Despite this, and the SCT budget being the only ring-fenced programme within the Ministry of Community Development, doubts remain about the wider commitment of GRZ to social protection, particularly following the death in 2014 of President Sata, its apparent champion. Before analysing the shifting level of commitment to SCTs in more depth, however, we first examine efforts to promote social health insurance during an overlapping period.

### **3.2. Social health insurance**

Discussions about social health insurance (SHI) in Zambia date back to the liberalisation reforms of the early 1990s, when the World Health Organisation (WHO), an external consultant and the Ministry of Health sought to introduce SHI in Zambia.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.lusakatimes.com/2013/05/15/president-michael-sata-defends-the-removal-of-maize-subsidies/>

<sup>6</sup> In the 2015 budget, ZMW 1.3 billion is included for social protection, which is 2.7 percent of the total Budget, but the majority is for the Public Service Pension Fund. The amount allocated to social cash transfers – ZMW 180 million – is only 0.4 percent of the total budget (Chikwanda, 2014). A further K1.1 billion (2.3 percent of the total budget) has been allocated to the Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP).

There was also support from within the health sector for insurance schemes that would protect health workers, who suffered badly during the country's HIV and AIDS crisis (ZG5, ZG6). However, efforts to promote SHI failed, due to poor design, a lack of buy-in within the political leadership and limited interest from within the international community (ZK3). These problems have continued to bedevil progress with this policy agenda in Zambia, despite strong progress elsewhere in the region. Health financing is an ongoing issue in Zambia. The introduction of user fees during the 1990s contributed to the 'externalisation' of health services (Larmer et al., 2014), including high profile cases of politicians or their family members being sent out of the country for health care (ZG5). Out-of-pocket costs are very high, and also regressive, with greater impact in rural areas with high poverty levels (Ministry of Health, 2008). The National Health Accounts 2002-04 revealed that households were one of the largest contributors to health expenditures peaking at 40 percent in 2000 (Econ/UNZA, MoH/ Sida/IHE, 2006). The move to abolish user fees again in 2006 was presented by then President Mwanawasa as a first step towards achieving universal access to health care; and in the run-up to the 2011 election PF claimed that health care was 'free throughout the country'. However, this only applies to free primary health coverage in rural and peri-urban areas (Ministry of Health, 2011) and in reality direct payments continue to exist in rural and urban areas. In addition, the funding gap created by this removal of user payments was not fully covered by an increase in government budget, and costs continue to go up, making this model unsustainable (ZG5). The majority of the population are not currently covered by insurance, but civil servants often take out private insurance schemes. One government worker explained that he only registers his children, as the insurance is too costly: 'we all live very risky lives' (ZG5).

The health sector suffered a further financial blow in 2009, when both Sweden and the Netherlands suspended their aid contributions to the sector following an alleged misappropriation of funds within the health ministry.<sup>7</sup> Government informants emphasise that this withdrawal of funds was a key driver of the revived interest in the idea of SHI, as it forced GRZ to consider how it could finance health through domestic revenues alone (ZG5, ZG6). Following its suspension of donor funding, SIDA has re-engaged to support SHI, providing technical assistance to the Ministry of Health. Tanzania has also provided technical support for the actuarial report on health insurance in Zambia and the design of the programme.<sup>8</sup>

A further influence was Premier Aid, a company from Zimbabwe that set up an insurance scheme for civil servants in Zambia in 2006. This created demand among teachers, who started to ask why Zambia could not come up with its own scheme (ZC11). Following consultations with the ILO and consultants, the Ministry of Health decided that the new scheme should include all formal sector workers and indigents

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.zambian-economist.com/2009/05/corruption-watch-ministry-of-health.html>

<sup>8</sup> One policy expert who has suggested that Zambia learn from Rwanda's experience of promoting and implementing social health insurance notes that GRZ is unwilling to look in that direction, due to Zambia's alliance with DRC.

from the outset, with contributions from the former group supporting the latter, along with funding from GRZ and donors, with informal sector workers covered in the second phase (ZG4, ZC7). Although promoted as a means of making health care more affordable for government, the scheme would require GRZ to increase its allocations to the sector.

While an SHI bill has passed through the review stage, progress has stalled, which is probably due to a lack of agreement on coverage and clear plan for implementation. For example, there are some plans to roll out SHI to vulnerable groups using the existing SCT structures, although as of May 2015 discussions with the Ministry of Community Development over this had not progressed very far. Ministers have been sent on study tours to Thailand and Ghana, although without a pilot scheme in Zambia itself that can be visited and evaluated, as with SCTs, this effort seems not to have had the same positive results (ZC11).

In terms of securing wider buy-in, the public sector union was involved in the early stages of the process, negotiating for health insurance (ZC7). One trade union representative claimed that unions have been 'pioneers' of health insurance and that 'we brought the idea of introducing a voluntary medical scheme to cover medical expenses, that is voluntary on the part of the employees. This was the genesis of social health insurance in Zambia' (ZO9). However, there have been some concerns regarding the goal of a universal system that will also support informal and vulnerable groups. These concerns seem to be less about the inclusion of these groups per se, but rather that the efforts to design a universal scheme are causing delays in implementation that are affecting the formal workers. Both union and employer representatives stated that they were supportive of the idea of a universal approach, echoing the language of the solidarity principle (ZO8, ZO9, ZO10). The discussions about contributions focus on the negotiations between employers and workers about the percentage that each will contribute, with an assumption that the government will provide the funds to cover the informal and vulnerable groups (ZO8, ZO9).

Private sector actors have also raised concerns about financing the SHI scheme (ZO10). Zambia's informal sector accounts for between 40 and 60 percent of the country's GDP (Nhekairo, 2015), and GRZ has been reluctant to impose regulations on this sector (e.g. around taxation) for fear of resistance and losing votes (ZO8). Despite some resistance, initial results from the Zambia Household and Health Expenditure and Utilisation Survey, indicate that the willingness to pay for social health insurance (removing the poorest deciles) is K80 per month, which is higher than the average estimates of 2.5-3 percent of salary in the informal sector. The estimate for the formal sector is 5 percent of salary (ZC7). These figures will need to be confirmed when the survey is published, but initially demonstrate a willingness to join and to pay for such a scheme among workers.

This effort to promote SHI in Zambia compares unfavourably with the sustained effort to forge a constituency of support around an evidence-based agenda on SCTs.

Promoted less by a coalition than a disparate set of players acting in a fairly uncoordinated way, there does not seem to be a clear and credible plan of how the scheme would actually work in practice. Nor is there a compelling evidence base to justify its introduction amidst other pressing concerns in the health sector. More broadly, there is little evidence as yet that SHI is in alignment with Zambia's political settlement dynamics, the patron-client logics of which seem more attuned to the abolishment of user fees, rather than efforts to secure contributions from below.

#### **4. Policy coalitions, the political settlement and the role of ideas**

Our investigation suggests that the varying levels of elite commitment to different aspects of the social protection agenda in Zambia can be understood in relation to transnational efforts to form policy coalitions, political settlement dynamics and the cross-cutting role of ideas. This section analyses the relative progress of each policy reform in relation to these key elements of the conceptual framework that we outlined in Section 1.

##### **4.1. Transnational policy coalitions and local wars of position**

The formation of a transnationalised policy coalition in favour of social protection within Zambia has been a critical aspect of the story to date. In Ravi Kanbur's (2001) terms, this involved building the capacity and commitment of the 'civil society tendency' within Zambia (involving social sector ministries, certain donors and civil society organisations), to engage in a struggle with the finance ministry tendency with its often paradigmatically opposed ideas about development.

The struggle to promote social protection has been defined in terms of the efforts by actors within the civil society tendency to forge a strong coalition amongst themselves and to persuade their opponents in the finance ministry tendency of the legitimacy and importance of their case. Building the technical case for SCTs through an evidence base that was perceived as legitimate amongst leading bureaucrats was critical here. The dissemination of this evidence base, alongside the strategic use of study tours and informal networks, reflected a politically astute reading of the policy-making process in Zambia. This included the targeting of rising stars within the Ministry of Finance (two of whom would become permanent secretary and director of planning) and ensuring that the Ministry of Community Development had a desk officer in the Ministry of Finance. The use of a 'broker' with high-level political and bureaucratic connections and the skills to facilitate discussions across competing positions assisted this process. This politically attuned strategy was further enabled by the nature of the development advisors and agencies involved. Two of the key proponents working for DFID and UNICEF were strongly rooted in the Zambian context and remained in their posts much longer than is normal within the development industry's usual three-year posting cycle. This, and their close working relationship, further embedded the improved levels of donor co-ordination that characterised the building of this policy coalition after the departure of the World Bank and others in 2007, along with strong support from the headquarters of each agency.

In 2012 the World Bank re-entered the social protection sector in Zambia, citing the persistently high poverty rate and the need to address poverty through shared growth (ZC3). This has raised concerns that earlier disagreements and differences in approach will resurface and undermine the policy coalition in favour of social protection. The critical 2013 workshop revealed the benefits of having the convening power of this 'knowledge broker' onside, not least as the Bank has so far been the only agency brave enough to tackle GRZ concerning its use of agricultural subsidies (ZC2). However, the fact that donors needed to place so much emphasis on working in this way may also reflect the declining influence of donors since the heyday of their influence between the 1980s and mid-2000s.<sup>9</sup>

The relative positioning of the key domestic protagonists in the struggle between policy coalitions over SCTs has also been significant, irrespective of transnational manoeuvring. For most of the 2000s, the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services (MCDSS) was 'not seen by more powerful ministries as a particularly convincing policy champion in the field of poverty reduction' (Barrientos et al., 2005: 10). Under the PF government, the ministry was renamed the Ministry of Community Development and Mother and Child Health (MCDMCH). With its new remit over a significant proportion of the health budget and health sector personnel, MCDMCH became the second biggest-spending ministry after Education, seeing its status rise in relation to the Ministry of Finance and amongst the broader political class (ZG2, ZK1). However, this realignment has now been reversed, with mother and child health being moved back to the Ministry of Health, so it remains to be seen whether the increased status and capacity brought about by the larger mandate are retained. The position of the Ministry of Finance, meanwhile, has evolved through a mixture of leadership changes, growing concerns with the distributional failures of growth, and strategic efforts by the pro-social protection lobby to persuade certain key actors of the benefits of SCTs.

In contrast to the SCT coalition, the proponents of SHI have largely failed to secure the support of the most powerful players within either government or the donor community. They have not generated the ideas and evidence required to turn SHI into a credible policy agenda in the way that the coalition in support of SCTs eventually managed to do. The scheme is largely championed by a small team in the Ministry of Health led by a small donor with little buy-in from either larger donors or senior players in the ministry itself. Indeed, it seems unlikely that their rather disparate efforts have managed to form a force that even qualifies as a 'coalition' of the type that Leftwich (2012) argues is critical to the promotion of new policy agendas in developing countries.

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<sup>9</sup> Assistance to the budget from traditional donors has declined in recent years, from around 60 percent in the early 1990s to less than 30 percent in 2009, with official development assistance down to 11.2 percent of GNI in 2009 (BTI, 2012). This reflects debt relief and economic growth and the growing role of new donors such as China and private foundations (Faust, Leiderer and Schmitt, 2012).

Most significantly there is little buy-in for SHI from the *ruling* coalition. Although the PF party manifesto commits to extending health services, this is through abolishing user fees rather than increasing the costs to citizens. This is perhaps not surprising, given that the PF's political base resides primarily in urban areas, and the scheme would involve a redistribution of income from urban workers to rural dwellers.

#### **4.2. Political settlement dynamics in Zambia: the deepening of competitive clientelism and the rent distribution challenge**

Whilst the efforts of the policy coalition helped turn SCTs into a credible policy instrument, the dramatic increase in their funding in 2013 came following a shift of ruling coalitions and a crisis in the main means of rent-distribution to rural areas that directly reflected the wider workings of Zambia's competitive clientelist political settlement. Elected in late 2011 on a promise to 'put money into people's pockets', the PF president was actively searching for policy instruments which could help him to fulfil this pledge. Despite a commitment to 'social transfers' appearing in the PF's 2011 manifesto, and Sata's reputation as a champion of poverty reduction,<sup>10</sup> the president did not turn to SCTs in the first instance. According to one insider, he had actually struck out any mention of cash transfers in red ink from the first draft of the manifesto (ZG19).<sup>11</sup> This is perhaps unsurprising, given that the social basis of support for the PF was derived mainly from the urban working classes and intelligentsia, which led to a leftist policy agenda focused on the labour market: minimum wages, labour relations and being tough on businesses (Rakner and Helle, 2012: 11), rather than a focus on reducing rural poverty. This lack of a clear perspective on tackling rural poverty may have informed the contradictory approach of PF to agricultural subsidies, whereby the increase in funding for SCTs was directly informed by a public scandal in 2013 concerning overspend on the budget lines for the Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP) and the Food Reserve Agency (FRA) (ZC6, ZK2). The budgetary boost to SCTs thus flowed more clearly from this crisis of how to keep social goods flowing to rural areas than from a programmatic commitment to poverty reduction.

Nor, as it turned out, did it reflect a strong commitment to tackling political clientelism in favour of more effective and rules-based distributive mechanisms. Although Sata publicly condemned the profligacy of the agencies responsible for FISP and food relief, he lacked the capacity to challenge the interests vested in these programmes at multiple levels of governance, and spending levels for these programmes were soon re-established. This reflects the wider sense in which the PF's is 'populist' rather than programmatic, focused opportunistically on the unmet demands of distinct social groups rather than a particular ideology (Larmer and Fraser, 2007). The pro-poor nature of PF has also been questioned, based on the government's expenditure priorities in the first two years, which focused on infrastructure,

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.daily-mail.co.zm/?p=10654>

<sup>11</sup> It was later re-inserted by another senior member of the PF cabinet with a personal commitment to the agenda.

particularly roads, and tertiary education, including building new universities, i.e. initiatives that produce tangible outputs which are useful for demonstrating progress.

More broadly, there is little sign that social protection has traction within the normative views of political elites in Zambia. Neither SCTs nor SHI were significant issues during the 2014 presidential by-election campaigns, and when questioned directly on their policy agenda around social protection during a pre-election radio debate, presidential candidates revealed either a lack of awareness or outright hostility (ZO2). Our own interviews with opposition leaders suggest that members of the political elite see SCTs as a 'foreign grown programme' and as a form of dependency on the state (ZG7). Another leader has stated in no uncertain terms that 'I hate that stuff', explaining that creating jobs and business opportunities is a more decent approach and that education and agricultural subsidies are more appropriate forms of social protection (ZS4).

However, support for the SCT programme amongst parliamentarians is growing. According to one former member of the current government: 'The rural MPs loved the idea, it was largesse without any bullshit, you just give money away' (ZG19). Increased interest from MPs is raising the possibility that the programme becomes more politicised in nature. There is little evidence as yet that there are strong demands for either SCTs or SHI from voters, although this needs to be considered within the context of a somewhat passive political culture within which 'there is bugger all demand for anything anyway' (ZK1).

In terms of the distributional regime required to maintain ruling coalitions in power in Zambia, both the SCT and SHI initiatives have struggled to find policy space in relation to existing redistributive policies that have already secured a political constituency of support and which play a role in sustaining the current political settlement. As a form of state-subsidised support to rural areas, 'social protection' in Zambia is conceived of primarily in terms of agricultural and food subsidies (as in Malawi, see Chinsinga, 2012). Programmes such as FISP and FRA still pull significant resources away from other forms of social protection, with budgeted amounts for FISP actually increasing in 2014-15, despite Sata's rhetoric about reducing agricultural programmes following the scandal in 2013. This situation continues despite reports – including not only the World Bank's 2012 assessment, but also the government's own review of the Fifth National Development Plan – indicating that these subsidies, especially FISP, are not a cost-effective way of reducing poverty among the poorest, as those who benefit are mostly larger, non-poor farmers (Tesliuc, 2013).

Although this evidence has encouraged officials within the Ministry of Finance to propose that funds currently going towards FISP should be moved to SCTs and FSP programmes instead (ZG18), these subsidies are protected by powerful vested interests. They constitute 'an animal on its own, too big to challenge, very much a political programme' (ZC2), while SCTs are not politically popular enough to displace

them (ZC8, ZO4). Powerful interests here include the so-called ‘maize mafia’, which controls and benefits from the distribution of fertiliser and collection of maize in rural areas. This includes not only national-level companies, but also a widespread network of local bureaucrats, security officials and politicians who control local distribution networks (ZC0, ZG). Studies show that agricultural subsidies in Zambia are used primarily to reward loyalty amongst the ruling party’s voter base, particularly among wealthier households, although interestingly they do not have an impact on the share of votes won by the incumbent (Mason, Jane and van de Walle, 2013).<sup>12</sup> This form of political clientelism reflects the kind of decentralised rent-seeking that is characteristic of competitive clientelist settings and which is particularly difficult to reign in or render developmental (Kelsall, 2013).

A similar problem has also interrupted the progress of SHI, albeit not quite to the same extent. In particular, the political popularity of ‘free health care’ is something that is very difficult for the political class to contemplate undermining and acts as an obstacle to any significant attempt to restructure the nature of health sector financing in ways that would challenge the current ‘deal’ between government and citizens. This underlines the importance of viewing new instruments of social protection within the context of the wider distributional regime, not only in terms of competing funding priorities, but also with regards to the political work that such regimes do around maintaining ruling coalitions.

#### **4.3. The role of ideas**

Although the interests of the ruling coalition are clearly a determining factor in the uptake of social protection, ideas are also significant. This includes issues of ‘fit’ between the normative policy ideas of dominant players in the ruling coalition and the role played by more cognitive forms of evidence concerning problems of poverty with the potential of social protection to act as a solution (Schmidt, 2008). As illustrated above, the capacity of different policy coalitions to mobilise both normative ideas and a credible evidence base has closely shaped the progress of the social protection agenda. This may be through concerted efforts by donors to promote their agendas or through the unfolding of events, including new ministers of finance and realignments within the aid architecture that averted the early ‘war of position’ between competing donor visions of social protection (Deacon, 2007).

While the current government’s pro-poor ideas are cited by a wide range of informants as a reason for increased interest in SCTs since they took power, questions are also raised about whether this commitment is genuine, based on the government’s priorities and expenditure, as well as the president’s initial removal of cash transfers from the manifesto. These doubts suggest that the pro-poor messaging may have been used as legitimation for a decision that was actually triggered by the agricultural subsidy crisis. Framing SCTs as a more effective and

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<sup>12</sup> In the same paper, Mason et al. (2013) also demonstrate that poverty reduction gains more votes than agricultural subsidies and on this basis recommend that the government invests in programmes that reduce poverty and inequality.

pro-poor alternative to subsidies then may have been a form of 'communicative discourse' to persuade other stakeholders and the public (Schmidt, 2002), particularly as it is a predominantly rural programme unlikely to appeal to PF's urban constituency.

In terms of the ideas that have underpinned notions of welfare in Zambia, the clearest linkages are to the 'humanism' that emerged under Kaunda. Harland (2014) argues that this still resonates in Zambia, particularly through the continued use of the 'One Zambia, One Nation' rhetoric, and offers the basis on which a future welfare state might be built in Zambia. However, respondents contrast these former attitudes with young professionals and decision-makers who today are 'nonchalantly happy to denounce poor people' for their poverty, rather than wider structural forces (ZC3). This echoes earlier analyses of negative attitudes towards the poor amongst Zambia's political elite (Scarritt, 2006; Barrientos et al., 2005).

Moreover, the key developmental paradigm in Zambia has been less concerned with social welfare than with 'modernity', which is where Zambia, with its high rate of urbanisation and processes of class formation, seemed to be heading in the 1970s (Ferguson, 1999). This still prevails today: 'Zambians have not stopped thinking about the potential for both national development and personal transformation in decidedly modernist ways' (Larmer et al., 2014: 899). Neither the humanism nor the Christian ideals played on by certain leaders have gained the same degree of social and political salience. As such, one of the reasons why social protection has yet to become more fully established in Zambia may flow from the sense in which the discourse on social protection has not tapped into the deeper paradigmatic ideas (Schmidt, 2008) that underpin the political settlement in Zambia (whether around humanism or modernity), nor to seriously challenge elite ideas about dependency and deservingness.

Interestingly, there may be a closer alignment between the solidarity principle that underpins SHI and similar immanent notions within Zambian society, perhaps around humanism. Apart from some initial protests by the unions, there has been limited public resistance to the coverage of vulnerable groups, even though it would explicitly involve both GRZ and better-off Zambians allocating finance to help vulnerable citizens become protected. This may be due to a lack of understanding about the implications of the contributions, but also suggests that the solidarity principle underpinning the scheme is acceptable to Zambians, perhaps based on the strong tradition of providing support for family and community members at the local level (ZG5). Despite being a largely externally promoted effort, then, the idea of social health insurance appears to have some resonance with paradigmatic ideas within Zambian society. However, this remains largely untapped, due to the lack of a (cognitively) coherent case and policy plan for implementation.

More broadly, then, and despite the claims in the National Social Protection Policy of a paradigm shift that will 'enhance access to justice for the poor' (Ministry of

Community Development, Mother and Child Health, 2014), the conditions do not yet exist for social protection to be institutionalised as part of a new social contract in Zambia. In particular, SCTs are not understood in this way at any level other than donors and CSOs, with Ministry of Community Development officials and recipients both seeming to perceive SCTs in terms of a gift rather than a right.

## **5. Conclusion**

The uneven level of elite commitment to social protection in Zambia challenges mainstream accounts of how welfare states are likely to emerge in developing countries, and needs instead to be understood in relation to the interaction between the shifting nature of Zambia's political settlement and the promotional efforts of a transnationalised policy coalitions and actors. Although it took 10 years for a sufficient degree of convergence to emerge between these two, the interplay between them has been apparent since the onset of national debates around social protection in Zambia in the late 1990s, with both cash transfers through PWAS and health insurance initially promoted in relation to the country's experience of one of Africa's worst HIV and AIDS pandemics. However, it is notable that transnational efforts to promote social protection tended to overlook and undermine these domestic processes, and instead sought to create a new dynamic and constituency of support around more clearly imported policy agendas. Importantly, the HIV and AIDS crisis did not lead to the crisis of governance that some predicted at the time (de Waal, 2003), and had relatively little impact on the functioning and character of the political settlement in Zambia. Even where development agencies have managed to form a coherent policy coalition of sufficiently capable and committed powerful players, and succeeded in developing and promoting a credible policy agenda around social protection (as eventually occurred over a decade-long effort in the case of SCTs), progress remained limited until there was a shift in political settlement dynamics which led social protection to become more aligned with the interests and ideas of a new ruling coalition.

The level of commitment to SCTs remains limited, particularly when viewed in relation to existing forms of rent allocation that help sustain the clientelist settlement in Zambia. In comparison, the scaling-up of SCTs in Zambia reflects a one-off opportunistic decision by a populist leader, with the main driver being a perceived crisis during 2013 within the existing system of rent allocation based on agricultural subsidies. This occurred within a political settlement context that privileges personalised rather than programmatic decision-making.

While the pro-poor, urban-based PF has to some extent extended the vertical reach to lower-level factions through its populist approach, it remains more clearly focused on maintaining the settlement through a 'maximum coalition' focusing on the horizontal distribution of power between elite factions. This practice heralds a continuation of existing political and developmental strategies, rather than a significant rupture in the way in which power is organised and resources allocated. The shift towards a pro-poor agenda marked a shift in ideational rhetoric that

provided some space for the social protection agenda to gain ground, but only to a certain degree, and without having the power to displace more deeply embedded interests, policies and rent-allocation practices.

A political settlements framework is useful for understanding the development of social protection in Zambia because it allows for an analysis of the interaction between the ruling coalition and various policy coalitions. In the Zambia case, donor-driven policy coalitions played a vital role in developing and pushing the agenda until a combination of factors made it a politically useful option for the ruling coalition. The 'coalition' around SHI has been more fragmented, with little involvement from larger donors and senior political figures, and a lack of an evidence-based plan for how this complex scheme would work in practice. Each initiative has achieved a degree of ideational fit with dominant ideas, in part through generating sufficient evidence (or cognitive ideas) to re-shape normative perceptions, although neither as yet has managed this across all of Schmidt's three levels of paradigmatic, problem-framing and policy solutions.

How this all plays out in the future remains to be seen, although there are some initial signs that tensions are growing concerning the always fused technical and political aspects of this kind of programme, with MP interest increasing political pressure. If SCTs can be re-framed in ways that secure localised support, then it is difficult to see them being removed, even if there is a long way to go before they match the scale and political significance of agricultural subsidies as a form of rent allocation.

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## **Interviews conducted**

### ***Government representatives***

- ZG1: SCT Unit, MCDMCH (5 people), Lusaka, 13 April 2015
- ZG2: Director, MCDMCH Lusaka, 14 April 2015
- ZG3: Accountant, MCDMCH, Lusaka, 14 April 2015
- ZG4: Director, Ministry of Labour, Lusaka, 15 April 2015
- ZG5: Deputy Director, Ministry of Health, Lusaka, 15 April 2015
- ZG6: Director, Ministry of Health, Lusaka, 15 April 2015
- ZG7: Opposition party leader, Lusaka, 15 April 2015
- ZG8: Senior officer, MCDMCH, Choma, 27 April 2015
- ZG9: Provincial officer, MCDMCH, Choma, 27 April 2015
- ZG10: District officer, MCDMCH, Monze, 28 April 2015
- ZG11: Member of Parliament UPND, Lusaka, 29 April 2015
- ZG12: Member of Parliament UPND, Lusaka, 30 April 2015
- ZG13: Member of Parliament PF, Lusaka, 30 April 2015
- ZG14: Member of Parliament MMD, Lusaka, 30 April 2015
- ZG15: Member of Parliament PF, Lusaka, 30 April 2015
- ZG16: Senior official, MCDMCH, Lusaka, 6 May 2015
- ZG17: Director, MCDMCH, Lusaka, 7 May 2015
- ZG18: Desk officer, Ministry of Finance, Lusaka, 7 May 2015
- ZG19: Politician, Lusaka, 17 April 2015 and 30 April 2015

### ***Zambian organisations (trade unions, CSOs, think tanks, consultancies)***

- ZO1: CSO representative, Lusaka, 13 April 2015
- ZO2: CSO representatives (3 people), Lusaka, 13 April 2015
- ZO3: Consultant, Lusaka, 13 April 2015
- ZO4: Consultant, Lusaka, 14 April 2015
- ZO5: Think tank representatives (2 people), Lusaka, 16 April 2015
- ZO6: Think tank representative, Lusaka, 23 April 2015
- ZO7: CSO representative, Monze, 28 April 2015
- ZO8, Trade union representative, Lusaka, 29 April 2015
- ZO9: Trade union representative, Lusaka, 6 May 2015
- ZO10: Employers federation representative, Lusaka, 6 May 2015

**Cooperating partners (CPs)**

- ZC1: Representative of cooperating partner involved in SCT, Lusaka, 13 April 2015
- ZC2: Representative of cooperating partner involved in SCT, Lusaka, 14 April 2015
- ZC3: Representative of cooperating partner involved in SCT, Lusaka, 14 April 2015
- ZC4: Representative of cooperating partner involved in SCT, Lusaka, 15 April 2015
- ZC5: Representative of cooperating partner involved in SCT, Lusaka, 15 April 2015
- ZC6: Representative of cooperating partner involved in SCT, Lusaka, 15 April 2015
- ZC7: Representative of cooperating partner involved in SHI, Lusaka, 16 April 2015
- ZC8: Representative of a cooperating partner involved in SP, Lusaka, 20 April 2015
- ZC9: Representatives (x 2) of cooperating partner involved in SCT, Lusaka, 21 April 2015
- ZC10: Representative of cooperating partner involved in SHI, Lusaka, 22 April 2015
- ZC11: Representative of cooperating partner involved in SHI, Lusaka, 23 April 2015
- ZC12: Representative of cooperating partner involved in SCT, Lusaka, 30 April 2015
- ZC12: Representative of cooperating partner involved in SCT, Lusaka, 6 May 2015

**Key individuals**

- ZK1: Consultant and former CP representative, 17 April 2015 and 8 May 2015
- ZK2: Consultant, Lusaka, 13-17 April 2015
- ZK3: Consultant and former CP representative, email correspondence

**Public speeches**

- ZS1: Nkole Chishimba, Zambia Congress of Trade Unions, Lusaka, 1 May 2015
- ZS2: Hon. Fackson Shamenda, Lusaka, 1 May 2015
- ZS3: President Edgar Lungu, Lusaka, 1 May 2015
- ZS4: Hakainde Hichilema, Cape Town, 5 June 2015

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Global Development Institute, School of Environment, Education and Development,  
The University of Manchester, Oxford Road,  
Manchester M13 9PL, UK

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