

A graphic at the top of the page shows two hands shaking. One hand is pink and the other is blue. The background is a gradient of yellow, green, and blue.

FINAL REPORT

GENDER AWARE BENEFICIARY ANALYSIS OF SAINT LUCIA'S PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME



JUNE 2015

JULIE V. XAVIER, PHD

Submitted to UN Women Multi-Country Office – Caribbean



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**Submitted to the UN Women Multi-Country Office – Caribbean and the
UNICEF Office for the Eastern Caribbean Area**

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

GABA	Gender aware beneficiary assessment
KSL	Koudmen Sent Lisi
MoST	Ministry of Social Transformation, Local Government and Community Empowerment
NSPP	National Social Protection Policy
PAP	Public assistance programme
SSDF	St Lucia Social Development Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

Background

From as early as 1995, St Lucia's Poverty Assessment Report has underscored the need for better coordination of the country's social protection services (National Social Protection Policy [NSPP], 2014). The reconfiguration of St Lucia's social protection landscape has been ongoing for well over ten years. This reconfiguration has been characterized by the commissioning of several studies and the production of numerous reports aimed at assessing and guiding the country's efforts to establish a social protection platform. A common conclusion to most of these initiatives is that there is a plethora of similar, yet unconnected programmes that provide diverse forms of support to persons in situations of vulnerability. As a result of numerous investigative efforts, St Lucia is now at an advanced stage in developing and implementing an integrated social protection system.

St Lucia's Ministry of Social Transformation, Local Government and Community Empowerment (MoST), which has primary responsibility for designing and implementing the country's social protection policy, reached a major milestone in February 2015 when it launched the National Social Protection Policy (NSSP, 2014). Several months of stakeholder workshops and discussions informed the policy, helping to ensure that the needs of all vulnerable groups were adequately addressed. St Lucia's Social Protection Policy is aimed at providing "a clear framework for enhancing equity, efficiency and transparency in the delivery of social protection services" and is expected "to promote synergies among agencies, programmes, and interventions" (NSSP, 2014: 18). One of the stated policy objectives of the National Social Protection Policy (NSPP) is the adoption of life-cycle, human development and rights-based approaches in addressing the needs of poor and vulnerable groups. This objective underscores the country's commitment

to an integrated approach to social protection that is both child- and gender-sensitive.

The St Lucia Public Assistance Programme (PAP), coordinated by MoST, was initiated by the Public Assistance Act of 1968. According to the Act, PAP is expected to provide direct financial support to needy persons. Programme managers and other reviewers observed that PAP beneficiaries are predominantly the elderly and, to a lesser extent, persons with disabilities. As such, there has been growing concern that other key vulnerable groups, such as single mothers and children, may be excluded from the programme because it has not been tailored to address their needs. In assessing St Lucia's social safety net, Blank (2009) concluded that the existing safety net—and more specifically the PAP—failed to protect children, single parents (particularly mothers), and working-age persons. These observations are critical, given that the most recent Poverty Assessment for St Lucia also highlighted children, women and single mothers in particular as some of the most vulnerable groups in St Lucia (Caribbean Development Bank [CDB], 2006).

According to the Public Assistance Act, a needy person is "any and every person who by reason of infancy, old age, illness, disease, bodily infirmity or mental incapacity is unable to maintain himself or herself" (Division of Human Services and Family Affairs [DHSFA], 2008). In that sense, it is possible to see that by design, the PAP is geared towards supporting the elderly, the very young and the sick, but makes no specific provisions for women or children (other than infants). This Gender Aware Beneficiary Assessment (GABA) will assess the extent to which women in need of social assistance support and the children in their care may be excluded from the PAP because of its failure to make specific provisions for them.

As part of its efforts to strengthen its social protection initiatives and enhance the effectiveness

TABLE 1.1**Unemployment Rates in St Lucia, 2008-2013**

Year	Men	Women	Total
2008	12.6	17.8	15.0
2009	16.8	19.6	18.1
2010	19.5	22.0	20.6
2011	19.2	23.2	21.2
2012	19.4	23.6	21.4
2013	21.8	25.9	23.8

Source: St Lucia Statistics Department

of its programmes, MoST is seeking to harmonize the operations of the PAP and the Koudemen Sent Lisi (KSL) Programme. KSL was launched in 2008 and was modelled after the Chile Puente (Bridge) Programme, a conditional cash transfer initiative that provides intensive short-term or transitional psychosocial support¹ to families in extreme poverty. Although KSL is assigned to MoST for overall supervision and for budgetary purposes, the programme is directly managed by the St Lucia Social Development Fund (SSDF), a statutory body that focuses on poverty reduction and community empowerment through infrastructural support and social assistance.

A family-based and family-focused initiative that promotes full human development, KSL is structured on seven pillars of support: personal identification, health, education, family dynamics, housing, employment and income. The programme was founded on the assumption that these pillars form the basis for providing integrated support to families in situations of vulnerability. The most distinctive feature of KSL is its focus on psychosocial support provided to families in situations of extreme poverty and vulnerability.

In keeping with its missions to foster greater synergies among social protection initiatives and to facilitate a

more integrated social protection system, MoST intends to harmonize the PAP and KSL programmes. This GABA will explore the precise meaning and implications of the harmonization process envisioned by MoST, programme managers and officers.

This study forms part of the broader social safety net reform that MoST is currently undertaking. As part of this reform effort, other studies and projects are being planned or conducted simultaneously with this analysis. These include, inter alia, efforts to assess the institutional and operational mechanisms of MoST; preparations for the establishment of co-responsibilities with PAP and KSL; the harmonization of PAP and KSL; the mapping of social services on the island; and plans for the establishment of a management information system and a central registry system. Given that these initiatives have not been concluded by the time of this analysis, it was not possible to make projections on their outcomes or likely impacts. Any references to aspects of these or other ongoing initiatives are primarily based on the findings and analysis of independent research and respond to the specific objectives of this GABA.

¹ Psychosocial support refers to the guidance and support provided by trained counselors to beneficiary families in various aspects of life. The counselor assists the family in assessing their strengths, weakness and needs in areas such as health, employment and education in an effort to support them in improving their overall well-being.

Gender Aware Beneficiary Assessment

A GABA utilizes a gender perspective to evaluate a development programme in order to provide critical insights on the gender dimensions of its procedures and operations, primarily from the perspective of beneficiaries. This particular GABA will, in addition to the gender perspective, also explore the child-friendliness of the programme. Special attention will be given to single parents, particularly women with children. While there may be a small number of men who function as single parents, demographic statistics on St Lucia reveal that it is women who are overwhelmingly found to be in this situation. Moreover, poverty and social protection studies also reveal that women, particularly single mothers, are a more vulnerable group than men or single fathers.

The special focus on the conditions and experiences of women in this study is based on the recognition of persistent gender disparities and vulnerabilities in the country—notwithstanding the surface appearance that women are doing better than men. For example, despite girls' superior performance in the education system, a look at labour market statistics show that females' educational achievements are not reflected in their employment status. Data from the Department of Statistics show that from 2008 to 2013, women have consistently experienced higher rates of unemployment than men (see Table 1.1). Furthermore, in all industries, men tend to be paid more than women; on average, their gross pay is 10 per cent higher than that of women (see Table 1.2).

TABLE 1.2

Gross Pay by Industry Group and Sex

Industry Group	Sex	Mean (EC\$)	Number of Persons
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Male	1211	3429
	Female	1094	1005
	Average pay for all persons in industry group	1185	4434
Manufacturing	Male	1964	1520
	Female	1369	1260
	Average pay for all persons in industry group	1694	2780
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	Male	2015	3382
	Female	1545	4612
	Average pay for all persons in industry group	1744	7994
Accommodation and food service activities	Male	2265	3389
	Female	1769	4108
	Average pay for all persons in industry group	1993	7498
Education	Male	3027	754
	Female	2747	2182
	Average pay for all persons in industry group	2819	2936
Information and communication	Male	3347	563
	Female	2959	486
	Average pay for all persons in industry group	3168	1049
Financial and insurance activities	Male	4014	489
	Female	3373	1079
	Average pay for all persons in industry group	3573	1568
Total	Male	2276	
	Female	2048	
	Average pay for all persons in industry group	2169	

Source: Saint Lucia Population and Housing Census, 2010

Methodology

The terms of reference for this GABA indicate that its objective is to provide data and information on the gender dimensions of the procedural and operational limitations that beneficiaries experience in accessing the services of PAP. The GABA is therefore expected to tap into multiple sources of data and information in order to uncover these gender-based limitations. Consequently, the GABA was conducted using a mixed method approach involving primarily qualitative methods and a small-scale quantitative analysis of existing data.

Research Questions

The following research questions were developed to guide the conduct of the GABA and to organize its findings. They are based on the four domains that form the analytical approach for the study (enabling environment, supply, demand and quality):

- 1 Enabling environment: To what extent is there an enabling environment to support the PAP in providing quality social protection services that respond to the distinct needs of (different categories of) men and women, boys and girls and other vulnerable groups in St Lucia?
- 2 Supply: Are the essential commodities, inputs, services and human and other resources available and accessible to all eligible beneficiaries, without negative discrimination or burdensome costs?
- 3 Demand: Are there differences in demand for the services by different groups of men and women, and if so, what are the reasons for the differences in need and demand?
- 4 Quality: Are the PAP services and interventions of adequate quality to equitably address the needs of different types of affected groups?

Methods

The following methods were utilized in conducting the GABA:

Desk review

The desk review entailed a comprehensive examination of the reports, documents, databases, project files and manuals that pertain specifically to the daily operations of PAP as well as the general policies that guide the work of MoST. Some of the documents that were reviewed include:

- National Social Protection Policy, 2014;
- PAP Policy and Operations Manual for the Assessment and Payment of Public Assistance, 2008; St Lucia: Social Safety Net Assessment, 2009;
- Public Assistance Programme Special Audit Report, 2011;
- Budget Analysis for Investments in Children in St Lucia, 2014;
- Determining the Results of the Koudmen Sent Lisi Pilot Programme: A Social Safety Net Programme in St Lucia, 2014;
- Koudmen Sent Lisi Beneficiary Assessment, 2014;
- Case Study on the St Lucia National Eligibility Test, 2014;
- Analysis of the statistical robustness of the St Lucia's National Eligibility Test, 2014; and
- PAP and KSL application and other forms.

The desk review was also designed to facilitate a quantitative analysis of PAP using the databases. However, the type of in-depth analysis that was planned could not be undertaken because of the absence of an updated and reliable management information system with demographic and programme data for each applicant and beneficiary. Instead, what was available at MoST were multiple and disconnected databases that contained missing, inaccurate and outdated data. Therefore, the quantitative analysis that was conducted is at best merely descriptive, and only reflects beneficiaries and applicants for whom data were available. MoST has indicated that plans are underway to establish a management information system.

Key informant interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 26 MoST and programme officials who were familiar with PAP and SSDF. Each session lasted about 40 to 60 minutes, depending on the amount of information provided by the interviewee and his or her familiarity with the topics. The interviews were organized into two groups. The first group comprised programme managers and policymakers who were in a position to discuss the programmes from the perspective of the government's vision for them and with the programme's general policy directions. Interviews were conducted with the Honourable Minister for Social Transformation as well as the government's Cabinet Secretary as part of this group. Given that the PAP represents a major form of assistance for persons with disabilities in St Lucia, an interview was also conducted with the Executive Director of the National Council of and for Persons with Disabilities. The second group of key informants included former and present welfare officers and case management officers who work directly on the programmes. These individuals provided unique and very important perspectives, as they are involved in the daily operations and interactions with beneficiaries and applicants. They represent the implementing agents of MoST policies. Table 1.3 provides a summary of the profiles of persons interviewed as part of these key informant interviews.

Focus Group Discussions

This was the main method used to collect primary data from beneficiaries and applicants on their perspectives of PAP. Thirteen focus group discussions were held throughout the island. The island was divided into three regions: North, East to South, and West. Four focus groups were conducted each in the North and West, and five groups were held in the East to South. On average, there were 10 participants per focus group. Generally, the East to South and the Western regions included the more rural areas of the country.

There was a slight adjustment to the plan in terms of the composition of the focus groups as indicated in the original methodology. In some cases, there were no records of contact information for the intended participants. In others, records were available but they were not current or accurate. In some locations, it was

not possible to obtain a sufficient number of persons with the required characteristics to constitute a focus group. As a result, in the case of Babonneau and Gros Islet, rather than convening one group in Gros Islet for men of working age who are currently on the PAP and one group in Babonneau for elderly men on the waiting list, only one group of men currently on PAP could be conducted. Additionally, a new group was created in Souci/Millet for single mothers on the programme. This was in response to observations by welfare officers of the high volume of single mothers on PAP from the area who, because of the distance from Castries, are unable to obtain employment that would pay them enough to cover the high cost of transportation between Castries and Souci/Millet. Moreover, this was a group of interest because they were also required to travel to Castries by bus each month to receive their PAP payments.

Another change in focus group composition involved the females with disabilities in Vieux Fort. It was discovered that several of the persons with disabilities were completely bedridden and were unable to attend focus group meetings. Others had mental, hearing or speech-related disabilities, so they could not be expected to participate in the session. As a result, the group was convened with a small number of women with disabilities; the majority of other participants included mothers and other female caregivers of persons with disabilities. Table 1.4 provides details on all thirteen groups and highlights those groups that were changed.

In order to ensure that the cost of attendance did not deter persons from participating, transportation arrangements were made to ensure that participants were transported from their homes to the meeting sites and back. This approach was greatly appreciated by participants, as they are accustomed to using their limited funds to attend meetings, making visits to administrative offices to follow up on matters affecting them and to travelling to Castries or other locations to collect their monthly payments. Refreshments were also provided at the sessions, and participants were all grateful for this treat. To encourage free expression of opinions among participants, welfare officers were not present during focus group discussions.

TABLE 1.3**Key Informant Interviews**

Description of Interviewees	Number of Interviewees
Current and past Directors and policymakers of MoST, SSDF, Department of Gender Relations, Human Services, and the National Council of and for Persons with Disabilities	12
Welfare Officers and Executive Officer attached to Welfare Services, MoST	5
Former Welfare Officers, Department of Human Services	3
Family Support Workers and Administrative Assistant, SSDF	6
Total	26

Beneficiary interviews

In-depth interviews were also conducted with beneficiaries of PAP as well as with applicants who had been rejected or assigned to the waiting list. Interviewees were selected by purposive sampling from participants in the focus group discussions, and from persons whom the researcher encountered in the MoST office, other local offices and at the payment sites. Because of the number of participants involved, the focus group discussions did not allow each participant to share his or her specific experience in great detail. The main purpose of the beneficiary interviews was to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the personal experiences of select beneficiaries and applicants in their interaction with the PAP and its officers. Below is a list describing the 18 persons who were interviewed:

- 1 male of working age with disability currently on public assistance;
- 3 members of a three-generation family with various disabilities and enrolled in both KSL and PAP;
- 2 elderly females currently on public assistance;
- 1 female new applicant;
- 2 female caregivers of children with disabilities who are currently on PAP;
- 1 young man with a disability on the waiting list;
- 2 single mothers whose applications were rejected;
- 2 grandmothers on the waiting list;
- 1 elderly man whose application was rejected;

- 1 male of working age with disability whose application was rejected;
- 1 single mother on public assistance; and
- 1 single mother on the waiting list.

These interviews provided rich detail on the experiences of persons and served as the main source of data for the development of case studies. There were no formal interviews with children, although the researcher observed and interacted with them as part of the interviews with their parents.

Observation

A final method employed in conducting the GABA was observation. It involved the observation of procedures on payment days, town hall meetings, the intake process, the assessment of applicants using SL-NET (St Lucia's national eligibility test) and participation in home visits. Efforts to observe at least one of the monthly case management meetings were not successful. No Reviews were conducted during the period of the GABA, so it was not possible to observe this aspect of grant administration. The Review is a biannual activity, undertaken by welfare officers to update the status of current PAP beneficiaries. Persons are required to bring in recent medical certificates for recipients who are bedridden; parents bring in school report cards to show that the child beneficiaries are still enrolled in school; and the officer conducts a short unstructured interview to determine whether

the circumstances that qualified the individual(s) for assistance continue to exist.

Analytical approach

This GABA adopted and adapted the framework utilized by UNICEF's 'Determinant Analysis for Equity Programming' (2014). Designed as a mechanism for promoting equity-focused programming, this approach is relevant because the GABA is also designed to assess gender equity in PAP programming. More specifically, in the context of the GABA, the determinant analysis approach allowed for the systematic identification and assessment

of the most critical bottlenecks that undermine gender equity and child sensitivity. Such an approach is also pertinent at key moments in the life of a programme in order to effect necessary change. In that sense, the determinant analysis is relevant in conducting the GABA, as MoST explores specific areas of the programme to improve as part of its efforts to reconfigure it and to implement the NSPP through the promotion of a more gendered and child-sensitive approach to programming. Table 1.5 provides details on the relevant domains and determinants of that framework and the specific issues that pertain to each determinant.

TABLE 1.4
Profiles of Focus Group Discussions

#	Region	Location	Original Composition	Actual Composition	PAP Status
1	North	Gros Islet/ Babonneau	Males of working age	Males	Current
2	West	Soufriere	Males	Males	Rejected
3	East to South	Micoud	Males of working age	Males of working age	Waiting
4	North	Castries	Single mothers of working age	Single mothers of working age	Waiting
5	West	Anse La Raye-Canaries	Single mothers of working age	Single mothers of working age	Current
6	East to South	Laborie	Females	Females	Waiting
7	North	Castries	Males with disabilities	Males with disabilities	Current
8	East to South	Vieux Fort	Females with disabilities	Females with disabilities and female caregivers of persons with disabilities	Current
9	West	Souci/Millet	Not previously planned	Single mothers of working age	Current
10	West	Choiseul	Elderly males (65+)	Elderly males (65+)	Current
11	North	Castries	Elderly females (65+)	Elderly females (65+)	Current
12	East to South	Dennery	Elderly females (65+)	Females	Rejected

North: Gros Islet, Babonneau, Castries. West: Anse la Raye, Canaries, Soufriere, Choiseul.
East-South: Dennery, Micoud, Vieux Fort, Laborie

TABLE 1.5

Determinant Analysis Framework for GABA

Domains	Determinants	Research Questions	Specific Focal Points	Sources of Data
Enabling Environment	Legislation; Operational Guidelines; Policy	To what extent is there an enabling environment to support the PAP in providing quality social protection services that respond to the distinct needs of men and women, boys and girls and other vulnerable groups in St Lucia?	Are there barriers within the programmes that impede access by children and different categories of women? How effective are the existing laws, policies, and operational guidelines in addressing these constraints?	Desk review: policy and operational documents; laws; audit and other reports. Key Informant Interviews: Minister, MoST; the Permanent Secretary; Deputy Permanent Secretary; Cabinet Secretary; Current and Former Programme Directors.
	Management/ Coordination Mechanisms for the PAP/KSL		What mechanisms are in place for the management/coordination of the programme? Do these mechanisms effectively respond to the bottlenecks? What adjustments need to be made to address the identified bottlenecks?	Observation: payment procedures; town hall meetings. Key Informant Interviews: Permanent Secretary; Deputy Permanent Secretary; Programme Directors; Social Welfare Officers; Family Support Workers. Focus Group Discussions. Desk Review.
Supply	Availability of Essential Commodities - Budget	Are the essential commodities, inputs, services and human and other resources available and accessible to all eligible beneficiaries, without discrimination or added costs?	Does a sufficient budget exist to meet the needs of all eligible beneficiaries? If there is a limited budget, are all groups and subgroups equally affected by it? Are the allowances adequate for women, men, and children? The number of persons on waiting list? The length of time on waiting list?	Observation. Key Informant Interviews: Permanent Secretary; Deputy Permanent Secretary; Programme Directors; Social Welfare Officers; Family Support Workers. Focus Group Discussions. Desk Review.
	Availability of Trained Human Resources		Are there sufficient staff to assess applications, conduct reviews, process payments, address beneficiary concerns and perform other functions in a timely manner? Do the staff possess the relevant qualifications and training for the demands of the job? Is there ongoing relevancy training for staff? Is there evidence that critical roles (which promote gender equity and child sensitivity) are not (adequately) performed because of insufficient or lack of specialized staff? Are there enough staff to meet the demand? Are they appropriately trained to meet the different types of needs?	Observation. Key Informant Interviews: Permanent Secretary; Deputy Permanent Secretary; Programme Directors; Social Welfare Officers; Family Support Workers. Focus Group Discussions. Desk Review.
	Geographic Access		How far do applicants in the respective districts in the island have to travel to access services? Are any groups of applicants and beneficiaries more isolated than others? Is it easy or hard to take public transportation from the various areas to the service areas (payment outlets, main office, sub-offices, health service providers)? What is the cost of the public transportation? Are there any gender-related patterns in geographic access to the services? Do women with child-caring responsibilities have additional costs or burdens in accessing the services?	Observation. Key Informant Interviews: Programme Directors; Social Welfare Officers; Family Support Workers. Focus Group Discussions.

TABLE 1.5

Determinant Analysis Framework for GABA

Domains	Determinants	Research Questions	Specific Focal Points	Sources of Data
Demand	Initial Utilization	Are there differences in application and take-up of the services by different groups, and if so, what are the reasons for the differences in demand?	<p><i>Application process:</i> How did the applicants hear about PAP? What are the precise steps in the application process; the length of process; the frequency of visits to office during application; direct and indirect costs to applicants; gender differences that emerge as part of the process; and specific bottlenecks and different effects on men and women?</p> <p><i>Eligibility criteria:</i> Are there clearly defined eligibility criteria? Are officers aware of the criteria and do the criteria guide their daily operations (application assessment; reviews)? Is there consistency in the use of the eligibility criteria? Is there evidence of bottlenecks in the selection of beneficiaries? How do these bottlenecks affect men and women, and women with children differently? Are persons informed that they are on the waiting list? Are any interim measures employed to address the immediate needs of indigent men, women and children on the waiting list?</p>	<p>Key Informant Interviews: Programme Directors; Social Welfare Officers; Family Support Workers. Focus Group Discussions.</p>
	Continuous Utilization		<p>What are the gender differences in the day-to-day experiences with the programme after approval (reviews, payment days, accessing medical benefits)? How have experiences changed with the new banking system and how are men and women differentially affected by it? Which groups and subgroups have not been brought on to the banking system? In what ways do different categories of men and women supplement the PAP allowance? What are the co-responsibilities that are being proposed? How do different groups of male and female beneficiaries feel about the possible inclusion of co-responsibilities? What management and coordination arrangements are (or will be) in place for co-responsibilities? What are the consequences of non-compliance?</p>	<p>Observation. Key Informant Interviews: Permanent Secretary; Deputy Permanent Secretary; Programme Directors; Social Welfare Officers; Family Support Workers. Focus Group Discussions. Desk Review.</p> <p>Observation: payment procedures. Key Informant Interviews: Minister, Permanent Secretary, Deputy Permanent Secretary, MoST; Cabinet Secretary; ; Programme Directors; Social Welfare Officers; Family Support Workers. Focus Group Discussions. Desk Review.</p>
Quality	Effective Coverage and Quality	Are the PAP services and interventions of adequate quality to address the needs of different types of affected groups in an equitable manner?	<p>Is the allowance sufficient to meet the needs of different types of beneficiaries? How is the allowance used within the household?</p> <p>Are there differences in the way women and men feel about their personal security when going to get the money? Do children accompany their parents on payment days? Are there concerns about child safety at the payment offices? Are all relevant categories of individuals and families in need benefiting?</p>	<p>Key Informant Interviews: Permanent Secretary; Deputy Permanent Secretary; Programme Directors; Social Welfare Officers; Family Support Workers. Focus Group Discussions. Desk Review.</p>

Limitations and delimitation of the GABA

Limitations

There were several challenges that precluded the implementation of the methodology as originally planned or that undermined the quality of data obtained. The limitations include:

- There is no comprehensive management information system for data on PAP applicants and beneficiaries. MoST continues to store beneficiary information in paper files. Exacerbating the issue, several beneficiary files were misplaced during the shift from the Department of Human Services to MoST. Recently, intake information collected from applicants has been recorded in a separate Microsoft Word file for each applicant. However, it was found that the information collected included several errors and omissions. Critical data such as the sex, date of birth, date of approval and number of dependants is not available for all applicants. Additionally, while some efforts had been made to store beneficiary data electronically, these efforts were not sustained as a regular part of the programme's operations, so there was discontinuity in the records as well as differences in the type of data collected. This significantly hampered the extent to which a robust analysis could be conducted. Some of the data that were not available or not collected in a timely manner include:
 - Poverty levels of applicants to PAP;
 - Length of time on the programme;
 - Specific demographic details on all recipients/beneficiaries in a household (particularly details on the child beneficiaries); and
 - Primary reasons for assistance (e.g. presence of a disability and the details on the nature of disabilities).
- The time allotted for conducting the GABA was not commensurate with the scope of work required. This situation was further affected by the Christmas and New Year's holiday season, which resulted in the absence of several MoST officers who were crucial to the conduct of the GABA. It is important to consider the cultural norms and traditions of a country when planning such initiatives. Additionally, notwithstanding the overall support provided by MoST, there were further delays in the provision of

relevant data for the GABA, given that these were not readily available.

- The GABA planned to include persons who are currently receiving support from PAP, persons whose applications were unsuccessful and those who were on the waiting list. Because of the absence of updated contact information for both PAP beneficiaries and non-PAP beneficiaries, the constitution of some of the focus groups had to be changed so that persons selected were those for whom contact information was available.
- The inclusion of applicants who had been rejected or assigned to the waiting list could have created the false hope that they would receive assistance or that it would come soon. A key reason for these assumptions was that prior to being invited to participate in the research, these applicants had not been contacted or informed about the status of their applications. It was therefore incumbent on the researcher to clarify that participation in the research was not related to the outcome of their applications.
- Another limitation of the GABA is that the records kept by MoST do not provide demographic details on all beneficiaries in a particular household. For example, a woman may be registered as the PAP recipient for her household, but this does not necessarily mean that the grant is for her. She may be receiving EC\$280 per month, which is the amount for two beneficiaries in a household. This grant may be for the woman and one child, or for two children. As a result, the data received and analysed for the GABA may distort the actual situations that exist in some households. A more reliable approach to data recording would include, in addition to the woman's name and details, the ages, sex and special conditions of each recipient in the household.

Delimitation

It is important to establish the delimitation of the study, as this process ensures that readers are aware of the boundaries that have been set for the GABA. In so doing, it is hoped that the expectations of the GABA are in accordance with the actual scope of the study. In this regard, the following should be considered:

- This was a GABA of the PAP. It did not examine any other programme that may be administered by MoST, although some reference may be made to other programmes when necessary. Although there are current plans to harmonize the PAP and KSL, this study did not engage in an in-depth analysis of the KSL. KSL programme managers and officers were interviewed as part of the methodology to explore the current efforts at merging the two programmes. KSL beneficiaries were not interviewed, so the study did not include a beneficiary analysis from the perspective of KSL beneficiaries.
- Notwithstanding the fact that the GABA drew on data and information from several sources, the study was essentially designed to present an analysis based on the beneficiaries' experience of the PAP. The perspective of beneficiaries was therefore given priority in the study. The reason for this focus is that social programmes are by design expected to respond to the needs of beneficiaries. A beneficiary analysis represents a key moment in the life of a programme to stop and take stock of the quality of beneficiaries' interactions with the programme, primarily from the perspective of beneficiaries.
- The GABA was conducted at a time when MoST was in transition with the planning and implementation of several initiatives as part of the social safety net reform. One of the goals of the GABA was to support MoST as part of these reform efforts. In order for the GABA to be as comprehensive and useful as possible, it utilized a methodology that allowed for both a historical review of the PAP as well as an assessment of the programme as it is currently experienced by beneficiaries. However, the methodology of the GABA did not allow for projections on the future of the PAP or the ways in which MoST will implement the findings of current studies.

Structure of the Report

Chapter 2 presents an overview of PAP. It highlights the history and evolution of the programme, the current status of PAP and its implementation arrangements. This includes a mapping of the applicants' interface with the programme. In Chapter 3, a quantitative analysis of the various groups of PAP stakeholders will be presented, including current PAP beneficiaries, persons on the PAP waiting list and those whose applications were rejected. Case studies of these groups are presented as well. This is followed in Chapter 4 by an examination of four dimensions of PAP as defined by the analytical framework in order to identify and assess the gender and child-sensitive dimensions of any barriers and bottlenecks in the programme. The GABA concludes in Chapter 5 with a summary of the main findings and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2: THE PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

History and Evolution of the Programme

PAP was initiated by the 1968 Public Assistance Act. According to the Act, the PAP is expected to provide direct financial support to needy persons. On a monthly basis, a representative from the household receives a cash allowance for himself or herself or on behalf of one or more members of the household. Currently, persons receive between \$215 and \$465, depending on the size of the household. Some beneficiaries recalled when the allowance was as low as \$40 per month for one person.

MoST has coordinated PAP since 2013. Prior to that, PAP was managed by the Department of Human Services under the auspices of the Ministry of Health. The change was made as the Government of St Lucia felt that PAP was and should be part of the government's social protection initiatives. As a result, it was appropriate that the programme be assigned to MoST, which has overall responsibility for the country's social protection policies.

In 2013, the Government of St Lucia effected another change in PAP by approving an increase in the allowances to beneficiaries. There are no annual or regularly-scheduled increases to adjust for inflation. However, the changes in 2013 were designed to buffer the impacts on the poor of price increases from the institution of a 15 per cent value added tax (VAT). Table 2.1 presents the changes to PAP grants.

TABLE 2.1
Changes to Monthly PAP Grants

Number of persons in Household	Current Rate	Revised Rate	Per Cent Change
1	\$170	\$215	26.4
2	\$225	\$280	24.4
3	\$275	\$340	23.5
4	\$315	\$400	27.0
5	\$375	\$465	24.0

Source: Prime Minister's Budget Statement, 2013

The amounts paid per household do not reflect the total number of persons in the household, but rather the number of persons in the household who have qualified for assistance. It is possible—and not uncommon—to find that within one household a woman has two children under age 18 but she receives assistance for only one of them. It is also worth noting that households with more than five persons who qualify receive the same amount as those with five persons.

Demographic trends in St Lucia show that single parent and three-generation households have the greatest risk of poverty (CDB, 2006). Also, larger households are at the greatest risk of poverty. In light of this, there appears to be an inherent discrimination within the payment structure against larger and poorer households, as they are penalized for their larger size by being given the same amount as smaller households and expected to meet the needs of the

additional family members on the relatively smaller amounts. Since poverty studies have also established that the larger and poorer households also tend to be headed by single women (CDB, 2006), this payment structure effectively serves to discriminate against women and their children. Conversely, it must also be noted that within larger families it is possible to benefit from economies of scale that are derived from shared, fixed costs.

For much of the life of the programme, there have been no clear eligibility criteria. A look at the 2008 PAP Operations Manual demonstrates that no specific criteria were established for determining eligibility. Rather, the Operations Manual only refers to the main categories of persons who are expected to receive assistance as follows: lone persons, couples, children in care, persons infected with HIV/AIDS, persons affected by HIV/AIDS and disabled persons. Although the manual is no longer in use (and in some cases officers are not aware of its existence), it is evident that the general ethos of the document has been handed down over the years.

In 2011, the first known audit of PAP was conducted, the outcome of which was the 'Public Assistance Programme Special Audit Report'. The 'Audit Report' detailed several weaknesses in the programme. The absence of eligibility criteria was well documented in the 2011 'Audit Report'. As a result of lack of criteria, the programme has been highly dependent on the subjective interpretation of welfare officers and directors to determine who should receive assistance.

As part of the social safety net reform, and in accordance with the recommendations of the 2009 'Saint Lucia: Social Safety Net Assessment', in 2014 MoST took a significant step in addressing this deficiency in its programming by developing a locally-developed proxy means test, the SL-NET. Short of having specific and dependable data on the income levels within households, the proxy means test is an approach for deriving a proxy (an estimate or substitute) of the household's means (or 'income') based on other known details about the household. SL-NET now serves as a targeting instrument for the programme, since it produces for each household a poverty score, which is then used by officers to

determine who will receive support through PAP. Households with a score that is characterized as poor or indigent are approved for assistance. Although the instrument has not received cabinet approval yet, it is currently being tested and used by both PAP and KSL as a means of determining poverty levels of applicants, and thus, eligibility for support.

The Current Public Assistance Programme

In April 2015, PAP provided support to 2,446 households, or just over 3,000 individuals throughout St Lucia. Table 2.2 presents expenditures for the 2012 to 2013 and 2013 to 2014. It must be noted that the support provided for burial services is not reserved to PAP beneficiaries, but is also afforded to individuals who have died at the hands of the state (for example during police raids), as well as those who have not been claimed by family members.

For the financial year 2014/2015, the approved budget for PAP was \$7.9 million, which includes the allocation for the Disability Grant. The Disability Grant was initiated in 2014 by the Government of St Lucia and represents a separate window of support specifically for children with disabilities. Like PAP, it is managed by the Department of Community Services and local government of MoST. A monthly grant of \$200 per child is provided to eligible households to provide support in caring for children with severe disabilities. Eligibility is determined through specified medical screening at public health facilities. While PAP responds to financial need, the Disability Grant is provided on the basis of a child's disability. However, several persons receive PAP assistance because of disabilities, but this is not limited to children.

Implementation arrangements

The PAP card and benefits

Once an applicant has been approved for assistance, he or she receives a PAP card. This card has a six-month duration, and is issued twice a year. The card indicates the names and dates of birth of all of the beneficiaries in that household. Generally, only one card is issued to each household. Beneficiaries are required to produce their cards to the sub-collectors' offices each month

when the beneficiaries go to collect their allowances. Persons collecting allowances on behalf of others are also expected to show these cards on payment days.

The PAP card is also used to access health care services. Cardholders present them at local health centres and public hospitals in order to obtain exemptions for primary health care services and medication. Additionally, PAP beneficiaries have access to primary dental care and vision care every two years. Using the card, they receive these services at designated service providers such as the St Lucia Blind Welfare Association. PAP beneficiaries are also afforded support for burial services.

In recent times, some changes have been made with respect to health care services. St. Jude's Hospital, the hospital in Vieux Fort to the south of the island, previously provided free services to the PAP beneficiaries. However, from January 2015, persons requiring services at that hospital are expected to pay and PAP recipients have been encouraged to utilize wellness (health) centres instead. Although the hospital always operated as a private institution governed by a board, special allowances were made to accommodate PAP beneficiaries. However, in light of limited finances, there was a need to improve the efficiency and management of the hospital which involved an end to medical exemptions.

Although the PAP card is a critical part of the programme that allows beneficiaries to access other services, several beneficiaries indicated that sometimes there are significant delays in receiving the new cards. These delays mean that beneficiaries are left with expired cards, and as they approach health facilities they may be denied services because of their failure to produce current cards. Persons indicated that because the nurses at health centres or hospitals were familiar with some PAP beneficiaries, these individuals would receive the needed care with their expired cards, while others who were not known by the nurses are turned away. No clear gender biases emerged from these observations.

The review process

For much of its existence, PAP operated on the assumption that there would be no changes in the circumstances encountered by beneficiaries once they had been included on to the programme. As a result, there was little monitoring of beneficiaries. This situation resulted in several opportunities for leakage of PAP funds to persons who were not or no longer eligible for support. First, there was no official or reliable means of monitoring when beneficiaries passed away. As a result, their relatives were able to continue to receive the grant on their behalf. Second, persons who had been included on the programme as children and given the grant to support their school attendance continued to receive grants even past age

TABLE 2.2
PAP Expenditure 2012 to 2014

Line Item	2012/13 (EC\$)	Per Cent of Total Expenditure	2013/14 (EC\$)	Per Cent of Total Expenditure
1. Salaries and related emoluments	234,678.00	4.0	238,370	3.8
2. Other administration costs	55,728.00	0.9	115,653	1.8
3. Cash benefits	5,550,000.00	93.4	5,840,000	92.0
4. In-kind benefits (e.g. eye care services, burial)	100,000.00 (Estimated)	1.7	154,000 (Actual)	2.4
Total	5,940,406.00		6,348,023	

Source: Author's calculation of data obtained from MoST

18 and no longer attending school. Third, PAP support is initially granted to persons based on their current need, which may be due to inability to obtain employment or temporary misfortune. However, persons' conditions might have improved to the extent that they would no longer qualify for assistance. The failure to monitor beneficiaries meant that they would remain on the programme even after their circumstances improved.

This failure to reassess the continued eligibility of beneficiaries was noted as a shortcoming of the PAP by the 'Audit Report'. In response, MoST has been conducting biannual reviews as recommended by the Operations Manual. These reviews involve beneficiaries visiting the sub-offices for short, informal interview with the welfare officers. Welfare officers inquire into their living and employment conditions to determine whether there have been any significant changes that warrant a change in PAP support. For persons who are bedridden, their representatives bring in a medical report to indicate that they have been recently seen by a doctor. Parents are also required to bring in report cards for children on PAP in order to demonstrate that the children are still enrolled in school.

The PAP card is used as a management tool to monitor the status of beneficiaries, particularly those who are bedridden and unable to come in to receive their allowances in person. In order to obtain a new card, a beneficiary would need to undergo the review process.

Mapping the Cycle of Beneficiaries' Interface with PAP

As part of MoST's drive to improve the effectiveness of its social protection initiatives, PAP has been undergoing various changes during the last two years. Like other aspects of the programme, the beneficiaries' interface with PAP has undergone some changes in the past year as a result of the creation of SL-NET. This section will map the beneficiaries' interaction with the programme in two separate paths, the first being the pre-SL-NET path and the second being the current or post-SL-NET path (see Figures 2.1 and 2.2).

A critical difference between the two approaches is that prior to SL-NET, welfare officers were required to visit the homes of all applicants. With the installation and use of SL-NET, there is a pre-screening of cases and officers only visit those households that have been deemed poor or indigent by the SL-NET. There are a few advantages to the new approach. It significantly reduces the workload of the officers. The administrative costs of the programme are lowered because of the reduced mileage covered by the officers. Additionally, there is the general belief that the time for assessing cases has now been significantly reduced. Finally, the use of the SL-NET to determine eligibility of applicants supposedly represents a more objective and statistically robust method of determining eligibility. Recognizing that the SL-NET itself may still involve some inclusion and exclusion errors (particularly during the initial period of testing), it is useful that the results are openly discussed during the case management meetings, as this also allows officers and managers to address any oversights that might have occurred in the SL-NET assessment.

FIGURE 2.1
Pre-SL-NET path



FIGURE 2.2
Post-SL-NET Path



CHAPTER 3:

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Quantitative Analysis

Profile of PAP beneficiaries

Table 3.1 shows that the largest proportion of persons and households receiving PAP benefits are based in Castries and Vieux Fort. Table 3.1 also indicates that 80 per cent of households on public assistance as of April, 2015 are receiving benefits for only one member of the household (\$215 monthly). This does not mean that all of these are single occupant households. Rather, it

indicates that only one individual in the household is receiving assistance. Although there are differing views among welfare officers and programme managers as to whether the programme is a household-based or individual-based initiative, this observation clearly suggests that the programme is more directly targeted at individuals within the household.

TABLE 3.1

Number of Recipients of Public Assistance per Household, April 2015

Location	Household Categories					Total number of Households	Per Cent of Households	Total Number of Persons	Per Cent of all Persons
	1	2	3	4	5				
Anse la Raye	56	5	4	1	1	67	2.7	87	2.7
Babonneau	91	18	2	5	2	118	4.8	163	5.0
Canaries	45	7	4	0	1	57	2.3	76	2.3
Castries	386	46	17	15	11	475	19.4	644	19.6
Choiseul	214	34	8	3	4	263	10.8	338	10.3
Dennerly	151	22	6	1	1	181	7.4	227	6.9
Gros Islet	65	11	2	3	2	83	3.4	115	3.5
Laborie	188	29	11	10	2	240	9.8	329	10.0
Micoud	175	21	5	3	4	208	8.5	264	8.1
Souci/Millet	131	21	4	3	1	160	6.5	202	6.2
Soufriere	173	31	18	10	7	239	9.8	364	11.1
Vieux Fort	287	43	13	2	10	355	14.5	470	14.3
Total	1963	290	97	60	51	2446	100	3279	100
Per cent of total	80	12	4	2	2	100			

Source: Ministry of Social Transformation, Local Government and Community Empowerment

TABLE 3.2

Age and Sex of Main PAP Recipient per Household, 2013

Age Range	Female		Male		Age Group Total	Per Cent of Total
	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent		
14-25	15	1.3	20	1.7	35	2.9
26-35	57	4.8	27	2.3	84	7.0
36-45	82	6.9	42	3.5	124	10.4
46-55	113	9.5	72	6.0	185	15.5
56-65	79	6.6	76	6.4	155	13.0
66-75	81	6.8	81	6.8	162	13.6
76+	267	22.3	183	15.3	450	37.7
Total	694	58.1	501	41.9	1195	100

Source: Author's calculation of MoST data

Utilizing a database generated by MoST on PAP beneficiaries in 2013, it is possible to examine the age and gender distribution of household representatives. For this analysis, 260 cases could not be analysed because of missing data on the age or gender of the beneficiaries. Although there is a review process to update beneficiary status, the absence of a management information system precludes the update of beneficiary data onto a central database.

Table 3.2 shows that persons aged 66 and over represent about 51 per cent of PAP beneficiaries. This finding supports the generally held view that PAP is primarily targeted at the elderly. Although there have been efforts to include other demographic groups, the elderly continue to be the predominant group. This particular data must be assessed cautiously in light of information that is not available in the database. The table only provides a profile on the main recipient of the PAP grant for each household rather than all

individuals within the household who benefit from the grant. Additionally, because of the exclusion of cases with missing data (18 per cent of cases), the table only represents a portion of all household beneficiaries.

TABLE 3.3

Disability Status of 2013 PAP Recipients by Region

Region	Disability Status		Per Cent of Region's Beneficiaries with Disability	Per Cent of all Beneficiaries with Disability	Total
	Yes	No			
Anse la Raye	8	35	18.6	2.6	43
Babonneau	19	64	22.9	6.1	83
Canaries	19	29	39.6	6.1	48
Castries	105	336	23.8	33.5	441
Choiseul	12	60	16.7	3.8	72
Dennerly	22	120	15.5	7	142
Gros Islet	11	44	20.0	3.5	55
Laborie	13	133	8.9	4.2	146
Micoud	41	78	34.5	13.1	119
Soufriere	48	149	24.4	15.3	197
Vieux Fort	15	94	13.8	4.8	109
Total	313	1142	21.5	100	1455

Source: Author's compilation of MoST data

Persons with disabilities represent one of the vulnerable groups identified for assistance in the PAP Operations Manual. This group includes persons with physical disabilities (such as hearing, visual, speech impairments and those with limited or no mobility) and those with mental disabilities. The 2013 database of recipients is the only source that has compiled data identifying the presence of disabilities among PAP recipients. Per Table 3.3, Canaries stands out with 40 per cent of its beneficiaries having some form of disability. In examining the regional distribution of beneficiaries with disabilities, it is not surprising that Castries accounts for the largest group (34 per cent), since this is the district with the greatest number of beneficiaries overall. About 22 per cent of the 2013 PAP list registered some form of a disability with at least one member

of the household. The sex of these beneficiaries is not presented here, as the database does not clearly indicate the sex of the individual within the household with the disability. As MoST advances in its efforts to improve the management of information, programme management can be enhanced by registering details such as beneficiaries' age, sex and type of disability.

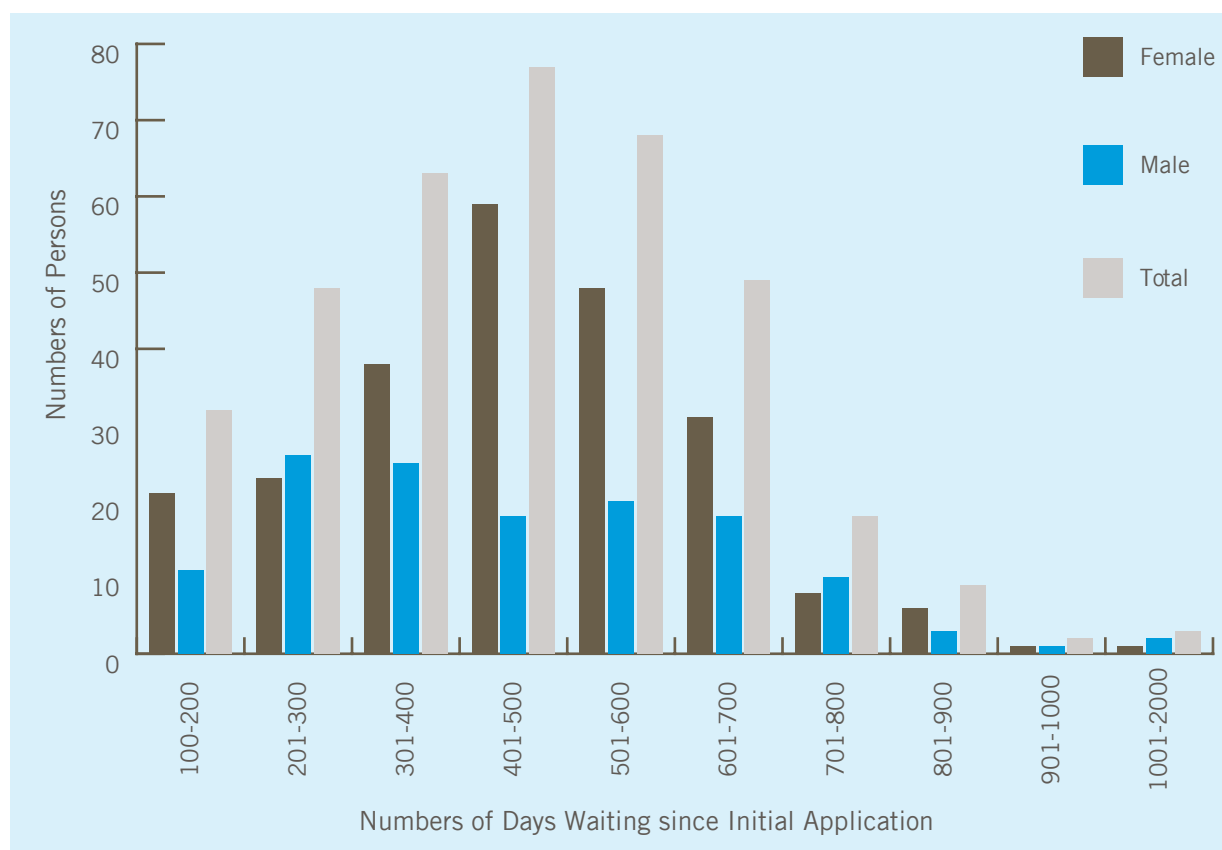
Profile of persons on the waiting list

Following the assessment of a household's need through SL-NET, a poverty score and status are generated. Depending on the exact score, the household may be categorized as non-poor, poor or indigent. Non-poor applicants are automatically rejected. Due to budgetary constraints, all new applicants who qualify for PAP assistance (i.e. persons who are either poor or indigent) are assigned to a waiting list. The general rule is that they may only be moved to the active list if and when assistance to another beneficiary is cancelled. However, according to PAP personnel exceptions may be made for 'special cases', but there is no clear indication on the definition of these special cases. It is commendable that the programme gives priority to the indigent over persons who are poor. However, given that those on the waiting list cannot

be supported unless new positions become vacant by current beneficiaries, it would be useful to know the levels of poverty of current beneficiaries. The review process should involve a more robust assessment to determine whether persons who have been receiving assistance qualify for continued assistance, particularly given that they were not initially assessed using SL-NET.

An examination of the application dates for the current waiting list reveals that the average waiting time for assistance was about one year and two months. Of the data provided on the waiting list, the oldest application dates back to March 2010. This is a cause for concern because five years in the life of an infant is a long time. Figure 3.1 shows the distribution of waiting times for persons on the waiting list.

FIGURE 3.1
Total Waiting Time for Persons on Waiting List



Source: Author's compilation of MoST data

TABLE 3.4

Age and Gender of Persons on the PAP Waiting List

Age Range	Female	Male	Total
12-25	24	12	36
26-35	47	9	56
36-45	45	17	62
46-55	37	30	67
56-65	28	19	47
66-75	30	23	53
76+	26	24	50
Missing	-	1	1
Total	237	135	372

Tables 3.4 and 3.5 show that the largest group of persons on the waiting list is female applicants who are poor (as opposed to indigent) and who fall between ages 26 and 45. During the conduct of the GABA it was not possible to obtain data on the poverty levels of all applicants. As a result, this precluded comparative analysis of the poverty levels of applicants and persons on the waiting list.

Given that the indigent group generally receives priority over the persons who are assessed as poor, it is likely that these women will have a much longer waiting time before being included in the PAP. Moreover, the age group suggests that this is precisely the group that is the concern of this GABA—single mothers or generally mothers of working age. Table 3.5 also shows that women are more likely to be indigent than men.

Based on the feedback obtained from interviews and focus group discussions, it is also highly likely that these women do not represent themselves, but rather they have applied for assistance on behalf of their children. This finding underscores the importance of addressing the needs of persons who have been assigned to the waiting list. The feedback obtained from these individuals is that they do not count themselves to be any better off than those who have been rejected, because the knowledge that they are on the waiting list neither comforts them nor addresses their immediate needs. Moreover, persons on the waiting list were not aware of the expected duration of the waiting time. The highest proportion of applicants on the waiting list (30 per cent) resides in the Castries area, followed by Vieux Fort and Dennery with 13 and 12 per cent respectively. This again is in keeping with the general distribution of beneficiaries by region.

Most persons on the waiting list indicated that they did not know the outcome of their application. The spokesperson for a young man with severe disabilities who is now on the waiting list stated: “Officers said they would come to assess the home, but we haven’t heard anything till today.” A 44-year-old man, who is a diabetic and an amputee, indicated that he had applied in 2014 but had never heard back from the office. Although some welfare officers indicated that applicants are normally encouraged to revisit the office in about a month to check the status of their applications, there seems to be a breakdown in communication as applicants continue to wait for feedback from the office and are not aware that they are expected to do the follow-up.

TABLE 3.5

Gender and Poverty Levels of Persons on Waiting List

Gender	Indigent		Poor		Total	%
	Number	%	Number	%		
Female	82	22	155	42	237	64
Male	33	9	102	27	135	36
Total	115	31	257	69	372	100

Profile of persons rejected

Applicants who are assessed as non-poor by SL-NET do not qualify for assistance. Standard procedure requires that a rejection letter be sent to these applicants. However, most unsuccessful applicants who were interviewed during the GABA indicated that they had never received feedback on the outcome of their application; in most cases, their applications had been filed more than a year ago. This practice was also confirmed by welfare officers who indicated that the last time letters were prepared was September 2014. Moreover, once the letters had been prepared, it was not customary to mail or deliver them to applicants. Rather, they were kept in the officers' desks until the applicant came back to the office to inquire about the application. Below are some of the comments made by participants of the focus groups who had not received feedback on their applications:

- "I waited long and then I called. They told me the officer was on vacation. The more I called, (the officer) was not attending to me. I was surprised when I got the call [to come to this meeting] because it has been a year and six months."
- "I thought they had forgotten about me, because it's been so long."
- "I applied two and a half years ago. I never heard anything before this call."

The assumption, as indicated by some officers, is that if the applicant is in dire need of assistance he/she would have checked in with the office to inquire about the application. However, such an assumption does not consider the power dynamics involved with persons in vulnerable conditions approaching state institutions for assistance. In many cases, the applicants experience fear and feelings of inferiority. Case workers with the KSL programme indicated that on several occasions they have been asked by beneficiaries of the KSL to accompany them when seeking services at various

FIGURE 3.2
Rejected Applicants by Region

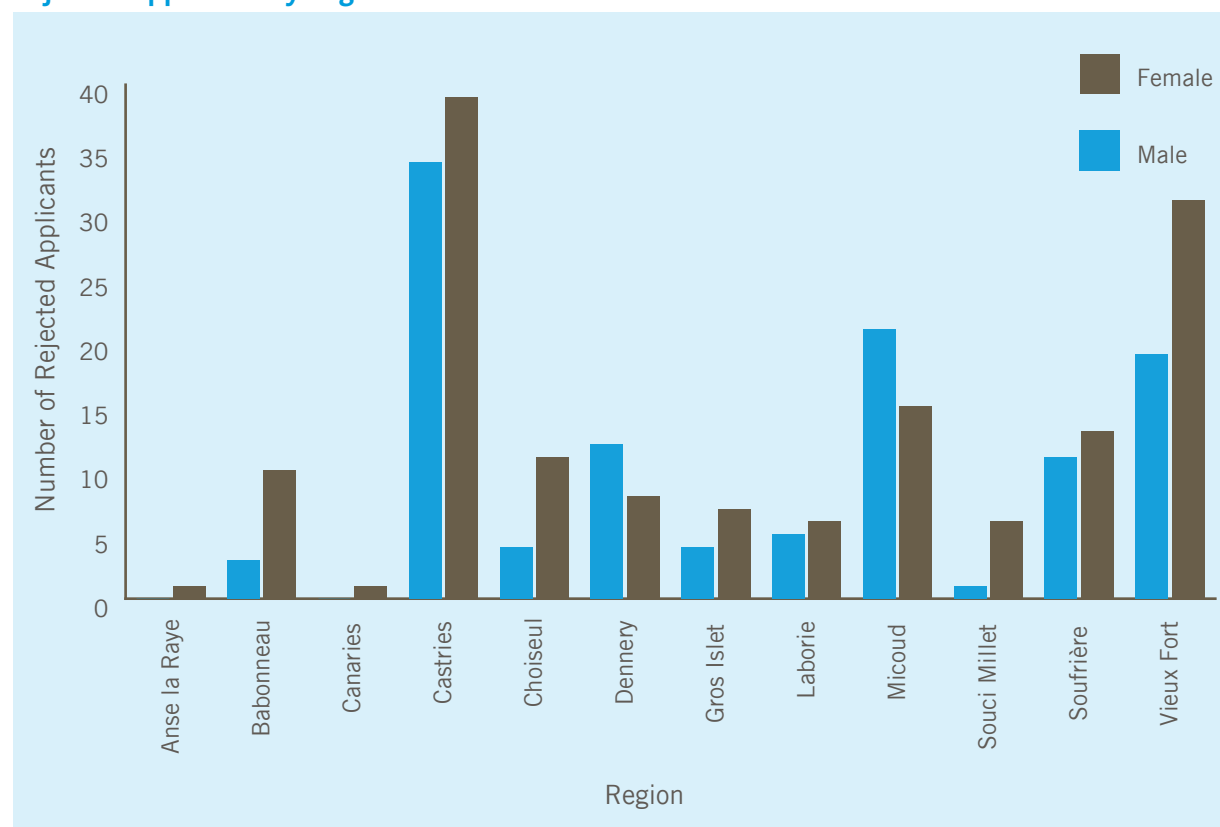


TABLE 3.6

Age and Gender of Rejected Applicants

Age Range	Female	Male	Total
14-25	4	4	8
26-35	9	5	14
36-45	12	8	20
46-55	20	13	33
56-65	25	20	45
66-75	33	40	73
76+	44	24	68
Missing	1	-	1
Total	148	114	262

government offices. This situation is most prevalent among persons who are less comfortable speaking English than French Creole and those who are not functionally literate.

The situation is further complicated by the absence of a standard appeals mechanism. While there is no official arrangement for appeal, welfare officers may encourage disgruntled applicants to take their cases to the Director. Several men and women admitted that they felt inhibited and did not have the courage to do so; as a result they simply accepted the result of the assessment. Those persons who capitalized on the opportunity to appeal their cases to the Director were more often women who refused to accept the rejection and demonstrated greater resolve. They were also persons who had information from others (welfare officers or friends on the programme) that appealing to the Director would generally result in a favourable outcome.

Of a total of 262 rejected applicants, the highest numbers of rejected applicants come from Castries (73) and Vieux Fort (50). This pattern reflects the overall regional distribution of applicants and current beneficiaries of PAP as seen in Table 3.1.

Overall, more female applicants have been rejected than male applicants, which may be due to the higher

number of applications from females than males. Because of the limited data from the source, it is not possible to engage in further analysis to examine additional demographic or socio-economic factors such as the number of dependents or the housing conditions of the applicants.

Table 3.6 also shows that most rejected applicants (males as well as females) are elderly persons from age 66 and over. This finding is in keeping with concerns expressed by welfare officers that the SL-NET is biased towards larger households and therefore has a tendency to reject elderly persons who live alone.

Case studies: The Many Faces of Women in Poverty

Case 1: Sandra

Sandra is a thirty-four-year old, unemployed mother of six. Her first child is 15 years old, and she currently receives \$200 a month from his father after filing a complaint with the family court. Four of her other children are ages 12, 10, 8 and 3. She complains that their father, Michael, only gives her a little money if she has sex with him. She is currently in a relationship with the father of her one-year-old last child. Her new partner is aware of the demands made on her by Michael. Though he does not like the situation, he seems to accept it.

She tried filing a case against Michael in the family court for child support, but she was unable to proceed with the application because she did not have all of the necessary documentation. For one of the children, she has no birth certificate; another's was misspelt on the document. It would cost her additional money to put these documents in order, which she cannot afford at this time. Although Michael works, he is not willing to support his children. In response to her threat to take him to court, he threatens to leave the country, or claims that he is willing to "take jail" instead of paying her.

Sandra's application for Public Assistance was made in 2013 on behalf of these four children. Since then, she has received no feedback on the status of the application. She is currently on the waiting list, and only found out her status as part of the focus group discussion.

Her limited resources have forced Sandra to keep some of her children out of school. It has now been a month since two of her sons have not gone to school because she has no money to cover the bus fare. Because of the location of their school, the girls are allowed to go as they can walk to school from their home. Her situation is now further complicated by the recent illness of one of her children, who has been suffering with stomach aches and constant vomiting.

Sandra is desperate and hopes that she will not be kept on the waiting list for much longer. She is further saddened as she reflects on what she sees as the

injustice of the PAP: "Sometimes I sit in town watching the people who get welfare, and so many of them go straight to the rum shops to drink after they get their money, and I seeing I just want the money to send my children to school."

Assessment

This case is typical of several others encountered during the GABA and demonstrates the difficult personal, economic and moral decisions that women face as they attempt to manage their households and negotiate with limited resources. Their primary concern is their children and their ability to provide them with meals and send them to school. Sandra's economic vulnerability has placed her in a situation in which a father of her children is able to exert power over her through his demand for sex. Moreover, although she is in a new relationship, her current partner serves as a passive observer as his girlfriend continues to sleep with a former partner in order to support her children. The current relationship is treated as separate from her previous relationship and its encumbering arrangements. This situation also highlights the fragmentation and disjointedness of such families, as the children are divided into categories based on their fathers and the level of support that they provide.

Case 2: Charlene

Charlene is a 37-year-old mother of three. Her children are 15, 11 and 6 years old. Some years ago, she took the father of her first son to family court because he failed to support his son. For 12 years he told the family court that he was not employed and was unable to help. The family court eventually ordered him to pay her \$150 a month, but he only did so for two or three months. According to Charlene, "He stopped paying because he did not want to put his money in my hand." When her son entered secondary school and realized how difficult it was for his mother to keep him in school, he decided to move in with his father. While she pines over the absence of her son, she knows that this is best for him, as it will ensure that he can complete his secondary education.

The father of her second child is a police officer who has failed to pay child support for the last three years. Charlene recently had a warrant issued for him, but it

has not been served because the police indicated that they have not been able to find him. He has also been suspended from his job and was expected to report to the station to sign in every week. He has neglected to do so. Charlene reported, “The police say they don’t know where he is. I don’t believe that because he’s a police just like them. How can they not know where he is? I believe they just being lenient because he’s one of them.”

Through the family court, Charlene has also tried to obtain child support from the father of her last child, but with little success. She first tried to do so when the child was two years old, but the officer at the family court said that the child was too old for her to make a claim then. In other words, since the father had not supported the child from birth to age two, there was no way they could compel him to start doing so now. Her application for public assistance was filed one and a half years ago on behalf of her two younger children; she has been placed on the waiting list.

After five years of searching, Charlene had just recently (less than a month before the interview) obtained employment at a security company where she works from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. or 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. daily at a hotel. During those years without a job, life was extremely hard—among other things, she was unable to pay her rent so she was forced to give up the apartment. It was at that point that her mother invited her and her children to move in with her. However, this is a difficult housing arrangement, with eight persons living in a three-bedroom house. Charlene’s three sisters occupy one bedroom; her mother and boyfriend occupy a second room, and Charlene and her two children use the third bedroom. Her mother has now had a change of heart; she frequently complains about Charlene and her children and insists that it is time that they leave her home. She constantly reminds Charlene that Charlene is the reason for her failure to complete school, and that she wished that Charlene had never been born. Charlene recalls that her own grandmother had treated her mother in the same manner, so to some extent, she does not blame her mother. She is eager to move out of her mother’s house and has made an application for a lot of land through the office of Crown Lands. However, she continues to await a response.

Her eleven and six year old children attend a school that is within walking distance of the house. However, while they are able to save on transportation costs, she does not always have money to pay for their meals. The school runs a School Feeding or Dollar programme, but there are many times throughout the month when she does not have the dollar to give to the children. In the case of her eleven year old, the teacher would feed him on the first day that he does not produce the dollar, but would give him a stern warning, “don’t come again.” On the other hand, the teacher of the six-year-old child would encourage Charlene to send the child to school whether or not they have the money for food because he is a very intelligent child and she would not want to see him miss out on school.

Assessment

While Charlene has approached PAP for the allowance, it is not certain that this allowance will necessarily relieve her situation. It appears that a greater need may be housing. As a 37-year-old mother, Charlene needs a home for her family. Not only would this allow her peace of mind and a sense of autonomy, it would also secure a more peaceful environment for raising her children, one that is devoid of the constant quarrels with her mother and the feelings of rejection that she faces. At the same time, her job with the security firm, which involves irregular and long working hours, compels her to continue living with her mother where there is someone to care for her children while she is at work. If Charlene moves out from her mother’s house she would then need to make arrangements for an after-school programme, as well as day care for the toddler. Her minimum wage salary is not likely to cover all of these additional expenses.

Case 3: Anita

Anita is a fifty-six year old grandmother whose life changed drastically since she decided to take on the responsibility of caring for her five grandchildren. The children are 16, 13, 12, 10 and 7 years old. They are all the children of her forty-year-old son; their mother died as a result of an illness. The children all lived with their father, but they were taken away from him by the Department of Social Services and placed in the care of their grandmother. Anita states that when they lived with their father, “they were all over the place,” roaming the streets at night when their father was out and attending school infrequently.

Having the children live with her has placed a heavy burden on Anita. She is the only one who works because her husband is ill (he is unable to use his arms). She is not sure whether it is arthritis. Anita works as a janitor with a primary school. However, as a daily paid worker she does not earn much. In fact, she is not quite sure of her exact salary as it varies according to the month. Whenever there is a holiday or when school is closed, she receives no pay. Her last daughter was also ill and had to be transferred to Barbados for medical care. Anita had to take a loan to cover these expenses. When the bank takes \$650 each month, she is barely left with \$100 for her other expenses. Her electricity bill alone is about \$180 a month. Her son gives her a little money sometimes—twenty or thirty dollars to assist with sending the children to school—but this is hardly enough or dependable. Now that the girls have reached menarche, Anita has additional expenses of providing them with their monthly supplies. On several occasions she has had to keep the children from school because she had no food to give to them. Because they attend the same school where she works, a teacher sometimes grants her a ticket to get some food for the children at the canteen.

Anita applied for the PAP one year ago, but has been assigned to the waiting list.

Assessment

This case is representative of many others where older women find themselves taking on the

responsibility of caring for their grandchildren in the face of neglect, illness or death of their children. Whereas elderly men approach PAP for personal support as their adult children are not willing to support them, in the case of the elderly women, they typically apply for assistance on behalf of their grandchildren. The burden of caring for children therefore follows women throughout their lifetime, from caring for their own children when they are young to caring for their grandchildren later in life.

Other concerns highlighted by the above cases include:

- The vulnerability of single mothers who work in the tourist industry, as well as the vulnerability of their children;
- The coexistence of inflexible and discretionary policies and approaches in the family court system, the justice system and the education system;
- The inconsistency of commitment and support from fathers and the stability of mothers;
- The need for psychosocial support of women, particularly during and after pregnancy, and for those who have been abandoned by the fathers of the children; and
- The need for access to non-cash assistance that could greatly alleviate the burden of care for single mother and allow for further opportunities to focus on seeking employment. These include after-school and day care; housing; legal aid; and health care access including access to family planning services.

CHAPTER 4: GENDER DIMENSIONS OF BOTTLENECKS AND BARRIERS IN THE PAP

Enabling Environment

Policy and legislation

With the development and launch of the NSPP, the policy environment of PAP has been significantly improved. The NSPP gives clear priority to women and children and highlights the importance of addressing their unique needs. However, the effectiveness of policy is tested in its implementation, which depends largely on the agencies and agents responsible for executing the policy. In the case of the NSPP, although it is still relatively new, it appears that there is a disconnect between the policy (makers) and implementers. Welfare officers and other officers from partner agencies are not fully aware of the details of policy or its implications for their daily operations. As a result, it may become difficult for officers to fully embrace the spirit of the policy or to effectively implement it.

The existence of an outdated operations manual and the absence of a project document that clearly outlines PAP objectives, eligibility criteria, intended outcomes and monitoring indicators also serves to limit the effectiveness of the new policy. These are critical instruments guiding officers on the new strategies required for the operationalization of the policy. It is expected that a new operations manual will be developed as part of the social safety net reform, but in the meantime officers continue to perform their duties without standardized procedures. A welfare officer gives an example of this: “A 15-year-old who has a child has to go back to school in order to receive money for herself and her child; otherwise it is only received

for the child. But there are no set guidelines to apply these rules.” As another example, when asked how the duration of support was determined (three months, six months, one year or permanent), one welfare officer stated: “There are no set guidelines for that. However, depending on the situation, we make a decision.”

Although priority is given to women and children in the new policy, it is important to ensure that officers understand the implications of this and are equipped with the relevant knowledge, skills and strategies to effect this paradigm shift. Interviews with officers and managers revealed some subtle or underlying biases against women. This was also confirmed by female beneficiaries and applicants as they reported on some of the comments made to them by officers in response to their applications for support.

Additionally, while the relevant policy is in place for the social protection of persons who fall under the purview of MoST, it is important to develop synergies with other related policies. The policies of other line ministries such as education, health, housing, transportation and legal services are not linked to the social protection policy, which undermines MoST’s efforts at facilitating effective harmonization. The harmonization of policies, programmes and operations is critical for addressing the gender disparities that emerge from this GABA, such as barriers in access to health care and decent housing, and the care burdens borne by women.

Management and coordination mechanisms

Information management

The GABA found that archaic methods of management and coordination were used, particularly with respect to data management. When an applicant visits the office to apply for PAP, household data is collected through an interview between the applicant and the welfare officer and stored in an electronic file. However, this information is not stored in a database with other applicants' data, but as a separate file for each applicant. This leads to duplication of efforts within MoST, additional (and unnecessary) transaction costs to beneficiaries and poor service delivery. For example, the same data are entered twice for each applicant, but by two different officers; the first time in the electronic intake form and the second time in the SL-NET. There is no management information system to capture data on beneficiaries and applicants or to update their files. Although a review is conducted every six months, there is no evidence of a record of the findings of the review. The only record of the beneficiaries' ages is the age at the time of the application or date of birth. However, this and other information (such as sex) is not available for all applicants. There is no follow-up or updated record of changes in life and living conditions, no indication of whether persons have died or if their PAP allowances have been altered over the years.

The GABA found differences among officers as far as their knowledge, understanding and interpretation of the components of the SL-NET. For example, a comparison of the databases provided by officers demonstrated that for the variable 'date', in some cases the date entered was the date of the application, while in other cases it was the date on which the officer had entered the data into the database. The former is likely to have been the correct interpretation. Moreover, the latter interpretation precludes the ability to accurately monitor the length of time that applicants have to wait at each stage of the interface cycle. The discrepancy in the dates may also reflect a need to harmonize the intake forms used by the officers and SL-NET. On the intake form, the first entry is 'date of intake'. However, with SL-Net, the date is automatically recorded as the date on which the data was entered

into the system (although this date can be manually changed). Additionally, there are several crucial errors and omissions in the captured data, such as the names of the beneficiaries, dates of birth, sex and addresses.

These discrepancies, as well as the absence of a system to capture and manage information, make it difficult to undertake effective monitoring of the programme. It was evident that there was no regular reporting or indicators in place for regular reporting. Rather, the production of reports was sporadic and was in response to changing requests by various consultants. Again, such an approach does not involve the most efficient use of MoST's limited resources. Furthermore, it served to frustrate the officers who were often called upon to respond to consultants' requests for information.

Harmonization of PAP and KSL

MoST's plans to harmonize the procedures of PAP and KSL are part of the general process of reform, aimed at reducing duplication among agencies and programmes. The harmonization of PAP and KSL is a commendable initiative, but it has not been adequately conceptualized before attempting to implement it. The GABA found that there was no clear understanding from the officers or management of either agency on the exact form that the harmonization process would take. Officers from PAP did not know much about KSL other than its emphasis on psychosocial support. Similarly, officers from KSL had limited understanding of PAP and its procedures. Notwithstanding the absence of a clear strategy or mutual knowledge of the programmes, officers were charged with the responsibility of getting the merger done.

In general, officers were confused about their roles and suspicious of the efforts of others to assist with their duties. While MoST reported that the harmonization process is still in its early stages, some officers felt that they were expected to get it done already—without having much clarity on the strategy. Some of the comments by officers about the PAP-KSL merger demonstrate this:

- "I have no understanding of what it means, since I don't know what their approach or policy or goals or plan is. It just a political means of getting political ways for giving people work. The heads might know

what exactly it means but that information has not been filtered to us. All they told us was to make it work because we said we have a lot of work to do. What we mean was that we couldn't do a lot of the one-to-one attention to our clients. I thought they could assist with the social aspect of our support. I would be wasting more time showing them what I have to do."

- "I don't know much about it. I really don't care about the merge."
- A manager of one of the programmes stated: "I'm not sure how it's going to work...I don't think we really know how it's going to work.... I don't think it is clear as to the procedure."

From early 2015, officers from KSL have been meeting with PAP officers to provide support in intake, home visits and review processes. Notwithstanding the feelings of confusion, fear, resentment and suspicion by some officers, there are cases where the new partnerships have been working smoothly and some officers are optimistic about the likely outcomes:

- "I think it's a great idea because many of our clients are those of KSL; because we can assist clients without too many barriers and processes, they can get housing and all other assistance without new intake."
- "It could be good having met with two of them. I have a client who is on both programmes and there are things we can do to help her together. Some welfare persons have men who were in prison; we can work together to help the men get jobs after incarceration."

The above comments demonstrate mixed views on the merger of the two programmes. In order to ensure a seamless process, there is a need to bring the relevant officers and managers of the two programmes together to share and exchange information about their programmes and to agree on the strategy for facilitating the harmonious coordination of activities.

Other management and coordination concerns

- MoST has made some commendable efforts in changing and improving the management and coordination of the programme. These include SL-NET and the payment arrangements, but some bottlenecks persist and new issues have arisen, such

as poor data management; banking charges; non-payment, late payment and incorrect payment by banks; variability in use and application of SL-NET; and the absence of clear operational guidelines, which has led to inconsistencies in approaches and policies. For example, according to standard procedures one beneficiary in a household receives \$215 and two beneficiaries receive \$280; however, there are cases where there are two beneficiaries in one household, each with their own PAP card and receiving \$215 each. Women with louder voices (who are feared or respected by officers), appear to benefit most from this discrepancy.

- Social norms that define the poor and those eligible for PAP as primarily elderly persons create some pressure to resist the changing face of vulnerable persons. New groups of poor or vulnerable have not received immediate attention, have been assigned to the waiting list or have had their applications denied. These include grandmothers caring for their grandchildren; widows who previously depended on their husbands; persons with debilitating health conditions; victims of violence who have become incapacitated; single mothers; women and mothers who are caregivers of persons with disabilities. The programme continues to function as an individual-based programme, not a household-based one, so that women in the households are not supported, only their children (below 18) or disabled/bedridden persons—yet eligibility assessment is done at the household level. The women do not believe they have a claim to assistance, because they insist that they only need the help for their children.

Supply

- The PAP budget for the year 2014 to 2015 stands at almost \$8 million dollars, out of which \$7 million dollars are assigned to cash transfers. The limited budget precludes addition of new persons without the removal of current recipients. As a result, there is a waiting list of nearly 400 persons, the majority of whom have been waiting for more than a year since they first applied for assistance. This represents about 18 per cent of current beneficiaries.
- Insufficient staff, poor use of staff time; staff not adequately trained, as evidenced in several errors on files; unsympathetic/undignified treatment of beneficiaries.
- As a result of poor access to information, particularly by men and women in rural areas, there is a high dependence on word of mouth. In addition, the lower tendency towards communal bonding in some urban areas results in some persons being more isolated and having little way of knowing what is happening with the programme (other than literally coming into central areas of the town). Some persons (both men and women) have the cell phone numbers of the welfare officers, but not all beneficiaries or applicants have phones.
- There is differential access to information on the benefits of the programme. Some persons learned of some of the benefits at the focus group discussions. In many cases, women had better access than men to information about benefits. Additionally, in some cases benefits vary for beneficiaries, depending on the welfare officer assigned to their area. This is evident, for example, in some of the southern districts where the officer inherited an informal arrangement from the previous officer. This involves an agreement with are supermarkets to provide nearly expired groceries to beneficiaries in need. Because of the inherent risk involved in this arrangement, it has not been adopted as a general procedure (it has, however, been under operation for several years).
- Persons in areas such as Souci/Millet and more rural parts of the island have a longer and more costly trip to the main or sub-offices to receive payment and other services. For women, this implies making arrangements for the day in order to their young children and disabled persons at home.

Demand

Initial utilization

Gender differences in demand

Several single mothers have approached MoST for support because the fathers of their children have abandoned both them and their children. This is part of a broader problem of fatherlessness that has recently received significant attention in St Lucia. As a result, gender differences emerge in the reasons for which persons apply for PAP. Whereas men generally apply for support to meet their personal needs (e.g. food, clothing, transportation and housing), most women approach the PAP to obtain support for their children.

PAP Focus on the elderly

While the Public Assistance Act does not specifically call for exclusive assistance to the elderly, there are certain arrangements in the programme and attitudes among PAP personnel that demonstrate a bias towards older persons. For example, the operations manual indicates that a National Assistance Board should be set up as the central authority for approval and removal of beneficiaries. Though the programme has continued to operate over the years without this Board, it is interesting to note that the guidelines for the Board membership point to a representative from the National Council of and for Older Persons, as well as a representative from the St Lucia Pensioners Association. On the other hand, the Board is not required to include any representative from women's associations, from the Gender Division or from the agencies responsible for protecting children's interests.

Additionally, former welfare officers indicated that while they had not received any specific training on gender or children's issues, training was provided on issues of gerontology and ageing. Current officers also expressed an interest in training on matters of ageing as well as support for persons with mental and physical disabilities, but no interest in gender training was reported.

Current and past officers and directors acknowledged that for a long time, the programme was seen as a programme for the elderly. Moreover, as efforts were made to extend services to others in need beyond

the elderly (such as single mothers), there was some initial resistance from within and outside of the programme. There are still some attitudes and beliefs among current PAP personnel that single mothers and younger persons in general should go out to acquire skills and find work rather than depend on the government for support.

Four critical concerns may be raised with respect to these attitudes. First, they imply that the education system has adequately prepared all students for the labour market. Second, they assume that the labour market provides an abundance of employment opportunities for young persons and that their economic conditions are the result of their own indolence. Third, they assume that women have the same opportunities in the labour market for decent, well-paid work as men. This assumption disregards the channelling of women into less prestigious and well-paid jobs, and the fact that women—sole parents in particular—have to juggle paid work and their unpaid care work responsibilities. Fourth, these attitudes serve as barriers to access for single mothers and their children. As indicated earlier, while the SL-NET is expected to screen all applicants and determine eligibility by assigning a poverty level to households, in practice officers have the opportunity to “make a case” for persons who they deem to be poor or worthy of the assistance. It is not likely that such a case would be made for young and single mothers by an officer who believes that the elderly are the ones who are really deserving of assistance and that young mothers should get out and find themselves a job.

Continued subjectivity in eligibility determination

Notwithstanding the existence of SL-NET, the creation of which is touted as an end to the subjective definition of poverty and eligibility determination, there is evidence that subjectivity persists both in the perception of poverty and in the decision-making process on applicants. A review of SOAP notes (**S**ubjective, **O**bjective, **A**ssessment, and **P**lan notes) found several instances of this subjectivity in assessing a person’s need by referencing their physical appearance. One intake SOAP note form describes the beneficiary as “fairly dressed and well groomed.” It is not clear how this observation is interpreted in the

decision as to whether the person should receive PAP benefits. This was a concern expressed by persons, particularly women who had been rejected or assigned to the waiting list. They objected to the practice of officers expecting persons to live in squalid conditions as a sign that they were actually poor. Others generally questioned the eligibility criteria for assisting persons:

- “Just because you clean, and you keep your place clean, they think you not poor and you shouldn’t get help.”
- “If you are somebody who knows how to keep yourself clean, does that mean you’re not poor?”
- “People help you because you take care of your things and sometimes you don’t even know the price of the things they give you.”
- “The officer said to me, ‘why can’t the person who is going up for elections help you?’”
- “The officer came to the house and saw a bicycle that my child’s father had; it was given to him some years ago. [The officer] wanted to know how my boyfriend maintains the bike.”

Some of these comments demonstrate a greater need beyond PAP. In some cases, persons may be in need of skills training, certification and employment to acquire a regular income, but they may not be in desperate conditions of poverty. However, there is the belief that the PAP is designed to resolve all of their problems. These perceptions also point to a need for public sensitization on the precise purpose and goals of PAP. The absence of this has led to various misconceptions and unrealistic expectations.

Continuous utilization

Payment arrangements

From the inception of the programme through to December 2014, PAP beneficiaries were paid in cash every month. From January 2015, some beneficiaries have been paid through bank transfers, as discussed below. The cash payments are generally made during the last week of each month, though the exact dates tend to vary. In the Castries area, persons receive payments from Tuesday to Friday of the last week of the month at the Castries Town Hall, beginning at 9:00 a.m. Beneficiaries arrive at the Town Hall from as early as 5:00 a.m. and stand in line for their allowances. One welfare officer,

serving as the paymaster, arrives at the Town Hall with the cash under police escort. At least one other welfare officer assists in dispensing allowances to beneficiaries.

This location in Castries serves beneficiaries from four different areas (Castries (including Bexon), Souci/Millet, Gros Islet and Babonneau), which represents a significant proportion of all PAP recipients. Through to December 2014, this represented 820 beneficiaries served by two officers over the course of four days. In the past, there were sub-offices in Gros Islet and Babonneau, so persons from these areas did not have to come in to Castries, but these offices have been discontinued. Also, in the past, one officer would drive around in a van to pay persons directly in their communities. However, following a robbery incident, it was decided that this practice was not safe and this too was discontinued. Persons who fail to collect their allowances during these four days, are required to wait until the subsequent month to collect. An account would be suspended if the beneficiary failed to collect the allowance for three consecutive months.

A slightly different arrangement has been used for payment of beneficiaries from the other districts. There is a local office in each of the other eight districts (Anse la Raye, Canaries, Choiseul, Dennery, Laborie, Micoud, Soufriere and Vieux Fort), and sub-collectors are responsible for paying allowances. Persons are allowed to come in to the sub-collectors' offices on any day in the month, once the monies for that month have been received by the sub-collector. In that sense, there is less pressure on the sub-collectors in these areas because there are fewer persons to be attended to and they have more time to issue the payments. Although their payment arrangements were different and to some extent better, beneficiaries from these other regions complained that those in Castries got paid before them. No gender disparities were noted in these concerns.

All beneficiaries complained that there was no set date(s) for payment; they had to keep coming into town to find out whether the payments were ready, and officers could not give them specific dates. They therefore depended on word of mouth from other recipients to know when payments are made. As one female beneficiary noted, "sometimes half knowing, half not knowing." This incurred additional transaction

costs to them, particularly those who travelled longer distances. For example, the bus ride from Souci/Millet to Castries takes about one hour and costs up to \$14 for the round trip. These additional trips posed additional burdens on women with toddlers or infants at home.

According to the Operations Manual, persons collecting money on behalf of others are expected to present a letter of authorization, the beneficiary's ID card and their own ID card. However, it was observed that persons were allowed to collect monies for others by simply presenting the beneficiary's PAP card. Given that the programme has had a history of persons collecting on behalf of others and not passing on the benefits to the intended recipients, this practice should be reviewed and regularized. Several PAP recipients are bedridden and unable to do much for themselves. Possession of a person's PAP cards is no indication of their permission to collect on their behalf.

A common complaint among PAP beneficiaries was the inhumane arrangements for payment in Castries. They indicated that the officers and persons managing the lines were "rough" in their manner of speech and they were generally treated with little respect. Persons stood in the rain or sun for several hours (often beginning 5:00 a.m.) for their allowances. Women also complained that they felt unsafe, as there were always fights or arguments while waiting in line. Many of them stood in line for hours while carrying their babies and toddlers. Some beneficiaries complained that they have observed persons, particularly the elderly faint or urinate on themselves while waiting in line. No special arrangements are made for pregnant women, women with children, persons with disabilities or the elderly. While observing the arrangements on one pay day in Castries, the author noted that the temperature was 82 degrees Fahrenheit as persons, young and old, with and without disabilities and mothers carrying their infants were required to stand outside in line for several hours.

It is important to note that MoST had made some efforts to improve the conditions for payments, but these were short-lived. Efforts included issuing tickets and providing seating arrangements. However, the recipients still found ways of cutting through the lines and others became concerned that they would lose

TABLE 4.1

Beneficiaries by Form of Payment for April 2015

Region	Bank	Sub-collector	Total	Per Cent Paid by Banks
Anse la Raye	40	27	67	60
Babonneau	58	60	118	49
Canaries	35	22	57	61
Castries	225	250	475	47
Choiseul	86	177	263	33
Dennerly	110	71	181	61
Souci/Millet	73	87	160	46
Gros Islet	43	40	83	52
Laborie	98	142	240	41
Micoud	67	141	208	32
Soufriere	62	177	239	26
Vieux Fort	88	267	355	25
Total	985	1461	2446	40

Source: Author's calculation of data obtained from MoST

their places in line if they stayed seated. As a result, they reverted to standing in the long lines, out in the open area.

In light of the many complaints about the payment arrangements, beginning in January, 2015 MoST instituted a change whereby allowances are sent to banks and credit unions on behalf of the beneficiaries. Beneficiaries were required to set up bank accounts. After four months with this new system, 40 per cent of the beneficiaries have now switched to the banking system. Others who are bedridden or with limited mobility will eventually receive their allowances through a cash card, however in the meantime they continue to be paid at the local offices.

There are mixed views on the new banking system, with about half of the beneficiaries indicating a preference for the banking system; the other half preferring the old system. Persons complained of further delays with the payments at the banks, and in some cases they have been short paid. They have also complained that the banks have been charging them for low balances. These

charges do not apply to persons who opted for banking with credit unions. Some persons have not managed to open bank accounts because they lack the two forms of identification that are required. This suggests that no specific or prior arrangements had been made with the banks to respond to the unique needs of persons on PAP. Moreover, the beneficiaries were told to open bank accounts, which they did so without knowing the costs associated with these new arrangements.

Now that funds are deposited directly into the accounts of beneficiaries, MoST faces an additional challenge in monitoring the status of beneficiaries. Since beneficiaries (or their representatives) are no longer required to come into the sub-offices to collect payments, it has become easier for the account of someone who has passed away or whose circumstances have changed to continue receiving benefits from the bank without MoST detecting the discrepancy for some time. The monthly visits to the sub-offices provided an opportunity for communication and interaction between officers and beneficiaries.

Conditionalities and Co-responsibilities

MoST, as part of the new NSPP, has decided to include conditionalities or co-responsibilities to the PAP. These refer to specific obligations that are imposed on beneficiaries of a programme as a condition for continued support. Officers and managers generally agree that conditions should be enforced because it is seen as a strategy for avoiding a sense of entitlement among programme beneficiaries and for encouraging a sense of responsibility in their development. Budlender (2014) has outlined several concerns with the imposition of conditions. These include the added administrative costs as well as the disproportionate burdens imposed on women.

During the conduct of the GABA, there were no clear decisions on the specific nature of the co-responsibilities that would be enforced. However, consideration was being given to parenting classes, health screening of pregnant women and babies and school attendance. All of these conditions relate to parents (mothers in particular), rather than other categories of PAP recipients. In that sense, it is important to consider whether the introduction of conditions involves a direct bias against women.

Given the GABA's findings of the difficulties faced by mothers in sending their children to school regularly because of the limited funds for food and transportation, it is highly likely that the enforcement of these new conditions will produce an additional burden on these same women and their families who are already struggling. If the conditions are enforced, it may result in some women and children losing their PAP benefits. Moreover, parenting classes should not be mandated without due consideration of the transaction and opportunity costs and other inconveniences that will have to be borne primarily by women. These include the cost of transportation to and from classes (particularly if those classes are not offered within walking distance in the immediate community), the cost or provision of child care and how the schedule of classes impacts on any efforts the woman might make to find a job and/or earn money.

These concerns may be better illustrated in a scenario comparing the implications of conditions for two households that are PAP beneficiaries. The first is a single man who is 67 years old; the second is a 42-year old single

mother of three children, aged three months, seven years and nine years. The following conditionalities or co-responsibilities may be instituted: parenting classes; vaccination for children, health check-ups for pregnant and lactating women; pap smears; and prostate cancer screening. Of the five possible conditions, four of them apply to the single mother and only one applies to the man. In order for the conditionality mechanism to be effective, there are usually consequences for non-compliance, the most severe of which involve the withdrawal of beneficiaries from the programme.

A general recommendation would be that MoST undertake a thorough investigation of the distinct cultural and social norms in St Lucia that may preclude the wholesale adoption of conditionalities from other countries. This assessment should not exclude an objective review of the supply of relevant services and the quality of these services and their gender-related impacts and their impacts on children, persons living with disabilities, rural dwellers and other vulnerable groups. During the conduct of the GABA, a parallel study was underway to determine most relevant conditionalities or co-responsibilities for the PAP and KSL. MoST's efforts at instituting conditionalities or co-responsibilities are likely to benefit greatly from beneficiary consultations on the matter.

Effective Coverage and Quality

Sufficiency and use of the allowance

In general, most of the current PAP beneficiaries were extremely grateful to be on the programme and happy that they could largely count on this regular sum of money every month. However, the most common and vociferous complaint pertained to the inadequacy of the allowance. Several persons indicated that the money does not last throughout the month, but only for about two weeks. Below are some of the responses to the question, "what do you think about the Public Assistance Programme?"

- One elderly man said: "If it wasn't for the programme, I would be dead. But after two weeks, all the money is gone."
- A single mother of four who lost her job as a caregiver said: "I think it is a good programme. The little money I get helps me to send the children to school, and I can feed them."

- A visually impaired middle-aged man stated: “The money is not much but it helps; still better than none at all.”
- One woman who receives the money to take care of her elderly mother who suffered a stroke noted: “It’s a wonderful programme. The money helps a lot. When the money is done I take credit from the local shop. I need more money but I am still thankful for what we are getting now.”
- An elderly lady made the following remark about the allowance: “It can block a hole.”

The complaint of insufficient money was most acute among single mothers and those with health conditions and disabilities. In the case of the latter, they complained that the cost of medical services, adult disposable diapers and medication is so high that most of the money is expended on these essential goods and services.

A 38-year-old mother of a 21-year-old lady who is completely paralysed stated: “Every three months I have to pay \$250 for my daughter to see her doctor. Because she is disabled I cannot take her out of the house so the doctor has to make house visits. And every three or four days I have to buy a new packet of Pampers; they cost \$60 for just 16 Pampers. The money is just not enough.”

Persons in the south of the island with health conditions and caregivers of such persons complained that they were experiencing even greater financial pressure in the last few months with the new arrangements that ended the free health services at St. Jude’s Hospital.

While they have been asked to use the free services at the local wellness centres, these centres do not provide the full range of services and medication that they need. It therefore means that they now have to pay for these services and supplies. A 64-year-old woman who has been unable to work for some years noted that an ultrasound at the hospital cost her \$100 and \$30 for a doctor’s visit; with that, the money is practically done. Additionally, beneficiaries indicated that a significant proportion of their allowance was absorbed by the recently instituted VAT— a 15 per cent charge on most purchases, including food items. While they were grateful for the recent 25 per cent increase in the monthly allowances, they felt that the new tax precluded them from fully enjoying that increase.

Single mothers were also strong proponents of increasing the allowance. They had difficulty paying for meals, transportation costs for their children to attend school and other basic necessities. They indicated that they often had to resort to keeping the children from school as a result of their financial constraints. At the same time, during the review process they were required to demonstrate that their children were still enrolled in school. These women therefore had to make deliberate decisions in managing the limited finances to ensure that they did not forfeit the support received from PAP. In cases where some of the children were on public assistance, the mothers tried to ensure that the children did not miss school too often, while the non-PAP children were allowed to stay home.

Paula

PAULA is a 60-year-old woman who was brought to tears as she reflected on her situation. She has a 32-year-old daughter, Carla, who is visually and hearing impaired and is also unable to speak. Her daughter also suffers with severe depression.

The last 32 years of Paula’s life have been dedicated to caring for her only child and they only have each other. For the past few years, Paula has been taking Carla to St. Jude’s Hospital. Using the PAP card,

Carla has received health care services (including psychiatric care). However, after her last visit last month, she was told that she needed to pay for the visit and the medication. Paula had not been informed of these new arrangements beforehand and she did not have the money. The nurse allowed her to go without paying, but warned her that it would be the last time. Paula is desperate and feels completely helpless and confused about her options.

Although both men and women complained about the insufficiency of the PAP allowance, men seemed to be generally less dissatisfied with the amount of money than women. Most men indicated that the extra money would have allowed them to buy much needed clothing and food. A few also indicated that they would be happy for more money to “buy a little cigarette” or a drink. The critical difference here is that while the extra money would have been used by women to support the school attendance and feeding of their children, in the case of men, the extra money would be put to personal “recreational” use.

Coverage of different categories of vulnerability

This GABA of PAP has revealed new categories of poor persons who were previously not considered poor or vulnerable or who found it difficult to convince welfare officers of their need for assistance. However, the criteria for assessing poverty levels may not be flexible enough to capture this new poor group. In some cases, their vulnerability was brought on by a new illness, disability, loss of the main breadwinner or a change in household composition. Although these life changes affect the household income, their housing conditions do not necessarily reflect the typical signs of poverty and so they may be bypassed as non-poor by the SL-NET, which gives significant weight to housing conditions and household amenities (Diaz, 2014). Their plight may be characterized as resource rich and income poor. The common thread among these groups is the absence of sufficient income to meet the basic household needs. In that sense, there is some deficiency in the coverage. The following are some of the categories of persons that emerged as non-urgent cases and were placed on the waiting list or simply rejected:

Grandmothers

This category includes grandparents, more specifically grandmothers, who have taken on the responsibility of caring for their children’s children. This decision by many women has resulted in increased vulnerability for them, and for this reason they have had to approach MoST for support. As in the case of mothers, these grandmothers insist that they are only seeking

assistance for their grandchildren. They have taken on these responsibilities following the death, imprisonment, abandonment or incapacitation of one or both of the children’s parents. Many of these grandmothers have no pension, or because of their age are unable to find steady employment with sufficient income.

Widows

Women, who for the greater part of their adult lives depended on their husbands and never worked, are suddenly impoverished by the loss of their husbands. This can happen before the widows are old enough to be considered deserving of PAP benefits on the grounds of age. Many of these women had worked exclusively in their homes and never acquired employable skills. Because many of them are now middle-aged, they find it difficult to acquire new skills and/or obtain jobs at this point.

Single (elderly) men

Whereas PAP has long been seen as a programme that primarily caters to elderly men who live alone, welfare officers have expressed concerns that this group may be gradually receiving less attention, particularly because of the small size of their households. During a focus group with single elderly men whose applications were unsuccessful, participants expressed concerns that programmes like PAP gave priority to women. More specifically, the elderly men felt that young women who are fully capable of going out to work were supported by PAP while older persons, who had no one to care for them and were either too old or too sick to work, were excluded from assistance. They also expressed a sense of inferiority to women as far as access to information.

The men felt that they were not as aware as women were of the various agencies that provide support to persons in need. This was also an observation made by some welfare officers. They indicated that compared to women, men were generally more inhibited about approaching social programmes. These gender differences may be due to the differences in societal expectations as far as the roles of men and women. Men are expected to be the breadwinners; the key individuals responsible for providing for themselves

Matthew

MATTHEW is a 67 year old man who has no siblings and no children. He lives all alone and has no source of income and no one to support him. He depends on the goodwill of his neighbours. He complained that he had difficulty understanding why he had not been granted assistance. He indicated that after he applied, he had waited for “a long time” but did not hear anything. He finally went back to the local office and was told that his application was not approved and that he should

go to the Castries office (about an hour away) to find out why his application was not approved. However, he said that he never bothered to go to the central office, because he thought it would be a waste of his time and money. He felt helpless about his ability to change the result because he did not believe that the programme was for elderly men like himself, but mainly for younger women.

and their families. Going to a social agency to request support may undermine their masculinity and demonstrate a failure to perform their role in society.

Women in relationships

There is an underlying assumption in the programme that a woman who is in a relationship is financially supported by her partner, particularly if he is employed. However, married women, women in common-law relationships and those in visiting unions complained that it was difficult to convince officers that the presence of a man in the house or in their lives did not necessarily mean that they were financially supported by this man. This view was also corroborated by officers who indicated that during the reviews, some women were found to be in relationships that they had tried to deny or hide (but officers had been able to confirm the existence of the relationships through the neighbours).

Contrary to this assumption, some of the applicants to PAP indicated that they were struggling to make ends meet, and although their husbands and partners may have been employed, the women were completely unaware of the men’s salaries and had little or no access to the monies. Moreover, a common practice within such households was for the man to make household and child-related purchases directly rather than give the money to the woman to decide what was needed. In some cases, the men handed small sums of money to the women or the children for very specific purchases, such as a pair of shoes for school. Another practice that the women

complained about was that men spent most of their earnings on alcohol, gambling and other women, while the basic needs of their household members remained unmet. This finding supports the concerns raised by Budlender (2014) on the problems in using household income or expenditure to determine the well-being of individuals in the household. According to Budlender, there are inequalities in the distribution of the household income that may go unnoticed by household-level means tests such as SL-NET.

The sick

Several persons indicated that the primary cause of their poverty stems from their chronic disease, such as diabetes, hypertension, sickle cell anaemia and arthritis. Not only does the illness preclude their ability to work, but their economic vulnerability is exacerbated by the high cost of medication and health care services. Although health centres and public hospitals are expected to provide medication for some chronic illnesses such as diabetes and hypertension, applicants complained that these medicines are rarely available and they are forced to purchase them from private pharmacies.

Young persons with disabilities

The GABA encountered several persons, including young individuals, with disabilities requesting assistance. In many cases they had only recently suffered the disability as a result of domestic violence or violence in the community. As far as violence in the community, these were often young men, but

according to the Director of Gender Relations, there was a noticeable increase in the number of women of all ages whose lives had been significantly altered as a result of domestic violence. Because they may have completed secondary school or because their housing conditions were not sufficiently desperate, they may not have been seen as poor—but nonetheless there is an absence of income.

One young man who lost his right arm in a dispute complained that although he was willing to work, no company was willing to hire him. Yet the officer assigned to his area had suggested that he was still young and able to find work despite his new disability. Others complained that because of the subtle nature of some of their disabilities, for example learning disabilities, they found it difficult to prove to officers that they were unable to hold regular jobs. On these matters, it is also important to consider the influence of cultural norms. In St Lucia, some traditional views persist about persons with disabilities, in particular, the view that they are of little use to society. In that regard, it should not be surprising that persons living

with disabilities who are willing to work are not obtaining the opportunities.

Female caregivers of persons with disabilities and other illnesses

This group of women complained that they were unable to work due to their responsibilities as caregivers to their children and other persons with disabilities or illnesses. In most cases, their relatives required round-the-clock care and the caregivers could hardly leave the house without having to make appropriate arrangements. Mothers of children with disabilities were particularly worried about leaving their children with others because of the high levels of child abuse in St Lucia and the added vulnerability of those with disabilities. Most of these persons were receiving PAP support on behalf of their ailing relative. However, this \$215 was specifically for the invalid and not for the caregiver. The women suggested that given that were precluded from working, consideration should be given to providing an allowance for the caregivers as well. Budlender (2014) noted the importance of a targeting mechanism that accounts

Gertrude

GERTRUDE is 63 years old and is unemployed. She is married and lives with her husband. She suffers with multiple medical complications, but has no money to cover the cost of her medication. Her children are all grown up and live on their own, but they do not provide any support to her. Although her husband works, she says that he hardly gives her any money and that she literally has to beg him for money to purchase any and everything—even new underwear when she needs it. She previously worked with a private company for 25 years, but her employer never made the requisite social security contributions to the National Insurance Corporation (NIC) on her behalf. As a result, NIC informed Gertrude that no benefits are due to her.

Gertrude came in to the MoST office to request some assistance. She had heard that with a PAP card it is possible to obtain free health services

and medication at public health facilities, and she believes that this would be a great relief to her. The welfare officer conducting the intake was doubtful that Gertrude will qualify for assistance because she lives with her husband, who is employed with a government agency, and it would be difficult for her to prove that her husband really does not support her. According to the officer, supporting Gertrude would be encouraging her husband to shirk his responsibilities to his wife.

This is a case that would require legal aid to enable the victim to sue her former employer. Also, because her husband is present and employed, the solution to this situation would be to force her husband to support her. Providing PAP benefits to this woman would result in a perverse incentive whereby more persons would be encouraged to shirk their responsibilities to their spouses.

for the income foregone by persons, particularly women, with caring responsibilities.

While the PAP should not be seen as a panacea that solves all social problems or assists all vulnerable groups and persons, it is important to be aware of these emerging groups and issues that may be currently out of the purview of the PAP. As part of the broad social protection agenda, it may be necessary to determine alternatives for supporting such groups.

Other Quality Concerns

- Most persons on the waiting list and those who have been rejected are not aware of their status, even after applying more than one year ago. They were never contacted or informed of the outcome of their application until they physically came back to the office to inquire about it.
- There appears to be no systematic way of moving persons from the waiting list to the recipient list. There is the general understanding that the most urgent cases receive priority, but officers have expressed concerns that this does not necessarily work in practice. There are concerns by both officers and applicants of political and personal interference in the decision-making process.
- Several beneficiaries complained about difficulties in accessing medical services and medication with the PAP card or an additional medical card from the Ministry of Health. Not all persons are aware of or understand the reasons for new arrangements whereby they can no longer receive free services from St. Jude's Hospital in Vieux Fort. Further, some of the services and medication they need and were obtaining from the hospital are not available at the health centre.
- While most men are happy to be on the programme, the majority of women, particularly single mothers, expressed the view that they would prefer to be employed, but they do not have the relevant skills or money to place their children in day care centres. They are also concerned about finding persons whom they can trust to care for their children.

Linkages with Other Sectors and Programmes

In assessing the quality of service provided by PAP, it is important to examine the existence and effectiveness of the programme's networking with other critical initiatives designed to address the needs of poor and vulnerable households. There is significant evidence of linkages with other government programmes and departments. While there is no formal agreement between MoST and the Department of Gender Relations, the latter refers persons (victims of domestic violence) to PAP, if only for temporary support. The Department of Human Services also refers individuals and families to PAP while they await settlement of matters in the family court. The Director of Community Services confirmed that many of these cases involve complicated family matters and are therefore treated as urgent and given priority for PAP assistance, albeit temporarily.

Two other programmes merit some attention as they emerged in the discussions among the applicants and PAP beneficiaries. These are the School Feeding Programme and the Transportation Subsidy Programme, both of which fall under the Ministry of Education. Although MoST does not have an official policy for either of the programmes, they exist in several schools throughout the country. The school feeding programme is reserved to infant and primary schools and currently exists in all but four schools on the island (the Canon Laurie Anglican Primary School, Dame Pearlette Louisy School, R.C. Boys Primary School, and the Gordon Walcott Memorial School). Interestingly, all of these schools are in the Castries area. Currently, 7,506 students from 79 schools are enrolled in the school feeding programme.

According to the information received from the Ministry of Education, the programme is set up on the free will of the school principals. Students are selected based on the observation of need by teachers and principals and on the request of parents. Students are required to pay \$1 a day for a hot meal, but students who do not have the money are not excluded. This differs slightly from the experiences reported by some of the women attending the focus groups, who indicated that they were often forced to keep their children at home because of lack of funds to cover the school meal.

The Transportation Subsidy Programme provides free transportation to and from school to secondary school students. Because of the limited budget, the programme could not be extended to all schools. Therefore, a needs assessment survey was conducted to determine which secondary schools had the greatest need for assistance. Based on the results of the survey, 15 schools with the greatest need were selected, and 2,225 students currently receive transportation assistance. The eight secondary schools that are not part of the programme are all based in the Castries area.

There is currently no arrangement in place to ensure that children who are PAP beneficiaries have direct access to the School Feeding Programme or the Transport Assistance Programme. This is a supply-side issue that would need to be addressed if conditionalities were to be introduced.

Systemic Barriers and Bottlenecks

In addition to the programmatic issues and concerns that affect women's ability to access the services of the programme, women in the focus groups and interviews also openly discussed the broader systemic issues that hindered their ability to progress. These issues have a distinctive effect on women, and were often associated with their care responsibilities. Moreover, they enhanced women's vulnerability and increased their demand for the support provided by PAP. It was therefore not surprising that those gender-based barriers were most acutely felt by women who were on the waiting list and by those whose PAP applications had been rejected (that is, women who did not have the PAP allowance as a safety net). These women felt that they had not been accepted onto PAP because programme operators failed to understand the actual conditions that they faced. Some of the gender-based systemic barriers and bottlenecks include:

Illiteracy and lack of marketable skills

Most or all of the women encountered in this GABA expressed an intense desire to work and to earn their own money. They believed that employment was the key to their independence. However, this desire was thwarted by their deficiency in marketable skills, and in some cases, their limited literacy.

Lack of viable employment opportunities

Many women lamented that even after they had spent time acquiring new skills with the National Skills Development Centre, they were disappointed to find that these initiatives often did not translate into new employment opportunities beyond the short-term job-placement sessions at the end of the skills training. Women complained that even when they possessed some skills, there was no guarantee of employment. Those with young children or who were pregnant had greater difficulty obtaining employment as it was felt that the burden of caring for the children would limit their productivity and flexibility on the job. For example, a young woman indicated that she had lost her job with a telecommunications company when she became pregnant. Her employer explained that they could not be held liable for any injuries or complications to her baby that may occur at work, and it was therefore best to dismiss her.

Young, single mothers also complained that in their efforts to obtain employment they are often expected to perform sexual favours for supervisors and employers. These situations present them with a predicament, as they need to keep the jobs in order to take care of their children. These are additional examples of the strong needs for legal aid and for sensitization of persons' legal rights. While PAP cannot be expected to do solve all problems for all persons, interactions with programme officers should result in persons being directed to the appropriate services and agencies.

Limited and costly day care centres

The high cost of daycare centres made it impossible for young single mothers to obtain employment or even go out to look for work. In rural areas, this situation was further exacerbated by limited options for daycare within the community and the subsequent need to go to the more urban centres for day care services (which also implies additional transportation costs for the mothers and their children).

CHAPTER 5:

RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the recommendations of the GABA. Although some of these recommendations are currently being examined by parallel studies within MoST, the study would be incomplete if the recommendations were excluded because they emerged from the independent GABA research as fundamental steps for addressing gender-based and child-related disparities in programming. Moreover, it is hoped that by including these recommendations, though seemingly redundant, they will nonetheless serve to support and guide MoST in its efforts to implement these critical initiatives. It is also important to note that the GABA was not designed to be an analysis of MoST's reform efforts, but rather to serve as a real-time analysis of the PAP and its supporting operational mechanisms as they currently exist.

The recommendations for addressing gender-based vulnerabilities and disparities associated with the PAP are as follows:

Memorandums of Understanding, Operational Guidelines and Policy

- Memorandums of understanding should be pursued with several entities, including:
 - **CREDIT UNIONS:** Establishing memorandums of understanding with credit unions will help ensure better terms for the types of beneficiaries on the programme. Current banking practices of imposing charges on low account balances are not appropriate for PAP beneficiaries who generally withdraw all of the money provided each month. Banks tend to have higher charges and more stringent measures than credit unions.
 - **THE JUSTICE MINISTRY:** A memorandum of understanding with the Justice Ministry will facilitate access to legal aid for a variety of issues, including child maintenance and access to protection orders.
 - **PUBLIC AND PRIVATE HEALTH SERVICES:** PAP beneficiaries should be exempt from paying for health services and medical supplies. Where services are not available through the public health care system, PAP beneficiaries should be able to access services through the private health care system with government assistance.
- **SERVICE PROVIDERS OF DAY CARE, ELDER CARE AND CARE FOR DISABLED:** When beneficiaries participate in capacity-building activities such as adult education, job training and active labour markets programmes, PAP should subsidize these costs.
- **SUPERMARKETS AND GROCERS:** PAP beneficiaries, particularly women with children, should be exempt from paying for food items or at least exempt from the VAT. Businesses could reclaim the cost of food items (or the VAT) from MoST.
- **THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION:** The GABA found that several parents (both on and off PAP) found it difficult to send their children to school every day because of insufficient funds to pay for food or transportation. No child should be prevented from having lunch at school. If a child cannot pay for the lunch, MoST should pay the Ministry of Education for the cost of the meal if the parent of the child is a beneficiary of PAP. Likewise, PAP children

should have access to the transportation subsidy and educational assistance provided by the Ministry of Education. The educational assistance programme provides free school books for children in poverty as well as support for tuition fees.

- There is a need to improve the communication strategy in the programme. Beneficiaries and other applicants posed various questions about the operations of the programme during the focus group sessions. This indicates that they do not know and/or understand several aspects of the programme or the rationale for some of the decisions taken. It was also discovered that some persons had greater access to information than others. Generally, women had more information than men, but some women—primarily those experiencing greater levels of poverty and with fewer connections—had even less information or access to information than other women. Therefore, there is a need to streamline the flow of information about the programme so that all persons and groups have equal access. This will become even more critical with the new payment arrangements, as officers will no longer see the beneficiaries every month for the allowances (the monies will instead go directly to the beneficiaries' banks). Perhaps in addition to the biannual reviews, it may be useful to have a quarterly town hall meeting in every region.
- There is a need for subsidized and dependable health care services for PAP beneficiaries and others in need. Current efforts at providing universal health care should ensure that vulnerable groups do not have to bear the cost of health services.
- A robust, regularly updated management information system is needed with quality control arrangements in order to ensure the accuracy of data. This system should include data on all PAP applicants and beneficiaries and allow for the tracking of their status. More importantly, staff should be trained to enter data into the management information system as part of their routine activities.
- A central registry system, shared by various departments and programmes, to provide support to vulnerable groups. This system would maintain accurate and current data on beneficiaries of those programmes and reduce duplication in programming. Additionally, the registry should be directly linked to the management information system in order to ensure coherence and accuracy of information.
- Standardizing the processes involved in using SL-NET should involve clear guidelines on its use and allowances for a human consideration of cases that might be deemed non-poor because of exclusion errors in the SL-NET (exclusion errors occur when someone who would otherwise qualify for programme benefits is nonetheless excluded from the programme).
- The need to maintain better records on beneficiaries stems from the absence of up-to-date contact information for them. This makes it difficult to reach beneficiaries when needed and raises the question of how do beneficiaries get informed about matters relating to the programme. Officers and beneficiaries indicated that they depend on word of mouth quite often. Such an approach inevitably excludes those with limited social capital who do not have the necessary networks of communication to keep them in the loop. It is therefore not surprising that some persons did not attend the town hall meetings to inform them of changes regarding the payment arrangements and health care benefits. The review process is supposed to be the time when officers update beneficiaries' contact information, but if they do not have ways of contacting them there is the issue of how to inform everyone of the review.
- Specific, standardized procedures should be put in place for the review of beneficiaries, and all officers should use the same process. There should also be a record of the information obtained for each beneficiary in order to update the beneficiaries' files.
- MoST should establish an effective and transparent appeals mechanism. The existence and purpose of this feature should be clearly communicated to all stakeholders so that applicants from all regions are aware of it and know how to use and access it when needed. Ideally, the appeals mechanism should not be centralized so that distance and transaction costs do not serve as deterrent to persons in rural areas.
- Although the Department of Human Services produced an Operations Manual in 2008, it is not in use and most persons are unaware of its existence. The current revamping of PAP represents an opportune moment to revise the Operations Manual

to establish standardized procedures and to reflect the changes that have occurred in the programme. The Operations Manual should include a code of conduct for staff that proscribes gender and other forms of bias and fosters individual discretion in the assessment of cases. The code should mandate adherence to the results of the SL-NET, while providing beneficiaries and rejected applicants with access to an appeals mechanism. The Operations Manual should also include a benefit-calculation formula (adjustable for inflation) that prioritizes the most vulnerable, including single women with children and the disabled.

- The skills of welfare officers should be increased and their daily procedures should be standardized. There are vast differences in the skills of officers, which translates to variations in the quality of services offered to different applicants and beneficiaries. Similarly, different officers choose to enforce different aspects of the PAP rules and bypass others. Officers have also noted that when they attempt to enforce agreed-upon rules, their decisions are sometimes overruled by upper management. This undoubtedly contributes to some degree of demotivation. It is therefore important to revisit the procedures and agree on which ones are the most important to be enforced.
- Training staff in areas such as social protection, gender equality and customer service and in interpreting the results of the annual Labour Force Surveys will encourage a greater appreciation for the economic and employment needs of youth and women in conditions of vulnerability.
- More thought and planning need to go into efforts to merge the operations of PAP and KSL. At present, officers have been mandated to get 'it' done without understanding exactly what 'it' is or knowing the purpose. Moreover, the officers from both PAP and KSL do not have a clear understanding of the way in which the other programme works. One of the most critical points of departure should be a sensitization workshop that brings together managers and officers from both programmes. At that session, persons from each programme could share details on project cycles, operations and general procedures. They may also present the gaps in their services and discuss the ways in which the other programme could meet those needs.

Services

- MoST should collaborate with the Ministry of Education to establish early childhood and daycare services/centres in areas without access. There is a need for both increased access to these centres as well as subsidized services, because in some cases they exist but are unaffordable to those in need. In the medium- to long term, efforts should be made to establish new centres, particularly in rural areas. In the short term, MoST should explore covering the costs of and regulating: (1) babysitters and licensed carers to provide these services, particularly in areas that are isolated and where demand is relatively low. This may also apply to persons and children with disabilities. (2) Incentivizing people in rural communities to provide home-based regulated day care where there is a demand, i.e. persons providing babysitting services from their home for a small group of children. (3) If the above two options are not feasible in the short term, broker an agreement with daycare centres in Castries to provide subsidized care to PAP beneficiaries.
- For those persons who may have dropped out of school (women in particular), MoST should work with relevant agencies to provide access to study support in order help them obtain their Caribbean Examinations Council, Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination or community college certification. Some persons indicated interest in some of the short-term employment opportunities provided by the government, but they have found that their failure to obtain secondary school certification disqualifies them. Adult education would be provided to persons who are interested in pursuing these paths.
- MoST should work with the Ministry of Housing towards the establishment of a rental subsidy programme for women with children/dependents.
- MoST should partner with relevant ministries and agencies to provide skills training, certification and job attachments in areas with income-earning potential. Women with children and unemployed youth should be on a priority list to participate in active labour market programmes.

CONCLUSION

While some of the above recommendations may be seen as beyond the scope or mandate of MoST, this GABA has demonstrated that there are systemic barriers that operate against beneficiaries and applicants and may undermine the effectiveness of the PAP grant. MoST has the overall mandate for the National Social Protection Policy, and this is a broad and comprehensive policy that integrates the multidimensional aspects of social protection. As such, MoST can hardly be expected to implement the policy on its own, but will require effective collaboration with other key ministries and agencies. As the engine for social protection in St Lucia, MoST is expected to engage other institutions, such as the Ministry of Education, to work towards improving the quality of services for the most vulnerable populations.

The Ministry of Social Transformation, Local Government and Community Empowerment has made major strides in establishing a social protection platform for St Lucia that is characterized by gender equity and child sensitivity. The development of the 2015 National Social Protection Policy represents a significant part of this effort. This GABA has critically assessed MoST's PAP with a view to determine which aspects of the programme continue to demonstrate barriers to gender equity and the protection of the well-being of children. The GABA has demonstrated several areas in need of improvement from an operational perspective and in terms of policy and service delivery. The findings present a critical opportunity for MoST to give full effect to the new social protection policy by addressing the concerns that have been endemic to the PAP for many years since its operation.

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