

Citizens' Report on Poverty, Vulnerability, Rights and Social Protection in Ghana

Presentation Outline



Introduction

- Social protection is:
 - “a range of actions carried out by the state and other parties in response to vulnerability and poverty, which seek to guarantee relief for those sections of the population who for any reason are not able to provide for themselves” (GoG, 2015: 2).
- Globally, social protection is recognized as a central element in sustainable poverty reduction and for addressing problems of inequality & vulnerability.
- Effective social protection systems will play a central role in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on poverty, inequality, hunger, etc.
- **SDG 1.3: Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all; substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable by 2030.**



Introduction/Motivation

- Success is conditional:
 - State (supply-side) and **society/citizen** (demand-side) commitment key to sustainability and effectiveness of SP
 - ***Demand-side***: public perceptions about poverty and vulnerability, the perceived factors that explain why some people become and stay poorer/vulnerable, and the socio-cultural norms on which support for the poor is based (Kalebe-Nyamongo and Marquette, 2014).
 - Yet, “popular attitudes towards poverty, inequality and social protection in Africa have not been examined deeply” (Seekings, 2018: 6).

Introduction/Motivation

- By the provisions of Ghana's 1992 Constitution, social protection is a **RIGHT!**
 - 'promote just and reasonable access by all citizens to public facilities and services';
 - 'provide adequate means of livelihood ... and public assistance to the needy'; and
 - 'provide social assistance to the aged such as will enable them to maintain a decent standard of living'.
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- The human rights-orientation of SP evident in Ghana's NSPP:
 - "universal social protection for Ghanaians throughout the life-cycle"; a means of attaining
 - "an all-inclusive and socially empowered society..." (NSPP, 2015: 12-18).
- Between rhetoric & reality?

Research Questions

1

What does the general public know about social protection (overall objective of SP, available programmes, eligibility, who is responsible for programme provision etc)?

2

How do they perceive poverty, vulnerability, and rights (citizen-state contract nexus)?

3

To what extent does the general public understand and apply their rights to social protection?

4

To what extent do cultural norms and attitudes reinforce reciprocity in social protection?

Methodology

Data collected in six (6) districts, two (2) each from the G/Accra, Oti and U/West regions

Data collection tools: a combination of survey, semi-structured interviews and FGDs

- A survey of 640 respondents, 58% female. Participants involved SP beneficiaries, non-beneficiaries, and middle class respondents.
- 12 FGDs, 4 in each
- Key informant interviews with at the national, regional and district levels: media practitioners, donors, CSOs, senior policy makers, religious leaders, district social welfare officers etc.

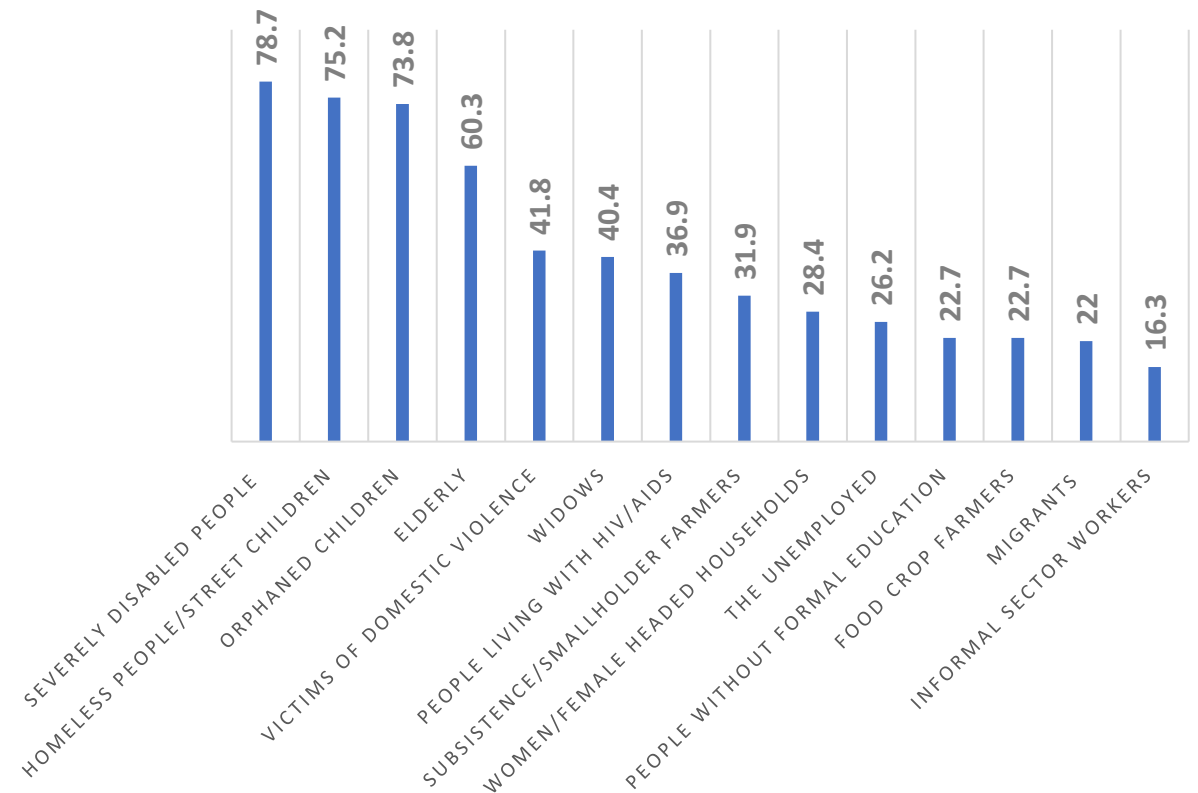
Ethical clearance obtained from the UG' Ethics Committee for the Humanities (ECH)

Perceptions of Poverty and Vulnerability

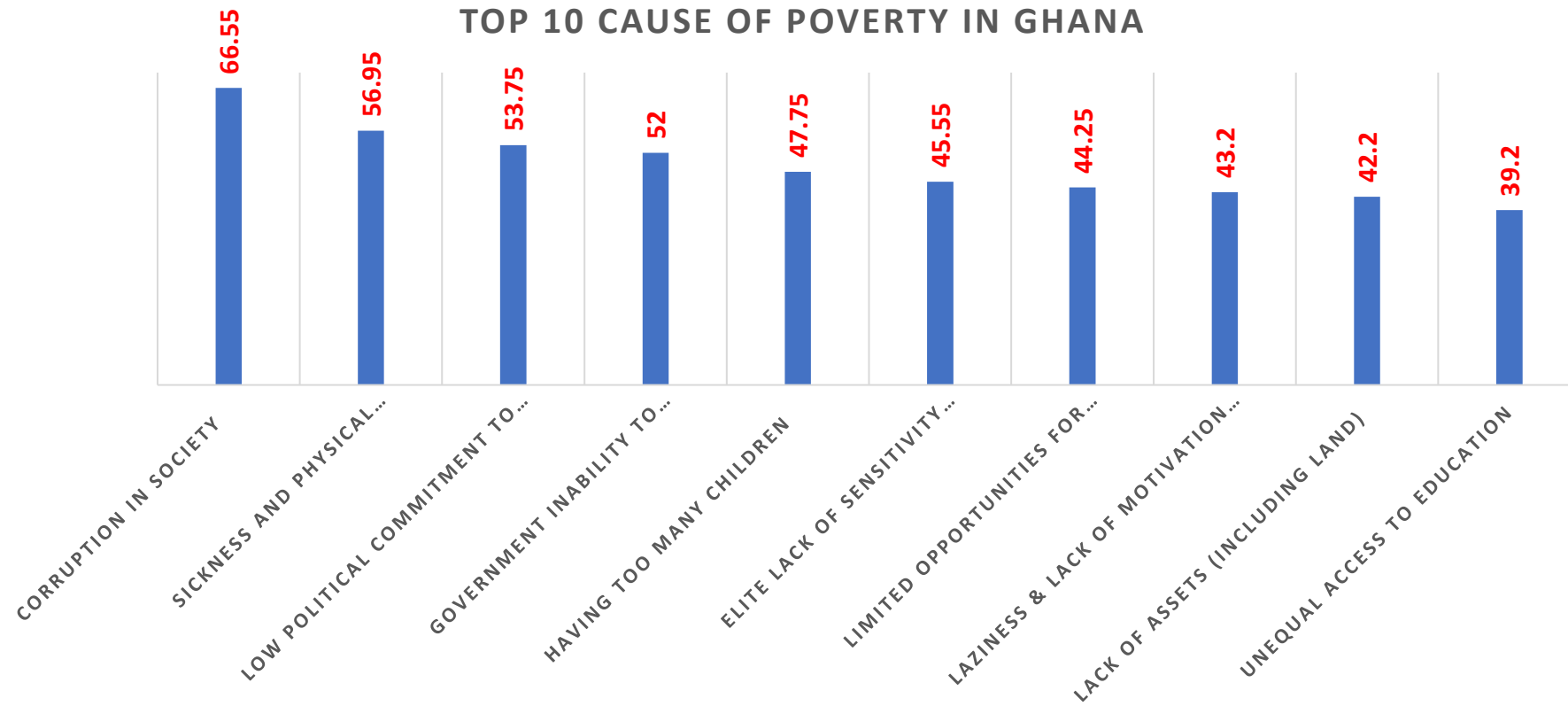
Poverty viewed largely in material terms: absence/lack of food, clothing and shelter

- ◆ Vulnerability, a state of helplessness or inability to fulfil needs without external support
- ◆ Poverty and vulnerability, often viewed as synonymous (lack of local words); proximity...
 - ‘vulnerability remains a challenging concept – even for well-educated Ghanaians – to grasp’ (PDA, 2011:105)

GHANAIS 'VERY LIKELY' TO BE VULNERABLE (%)

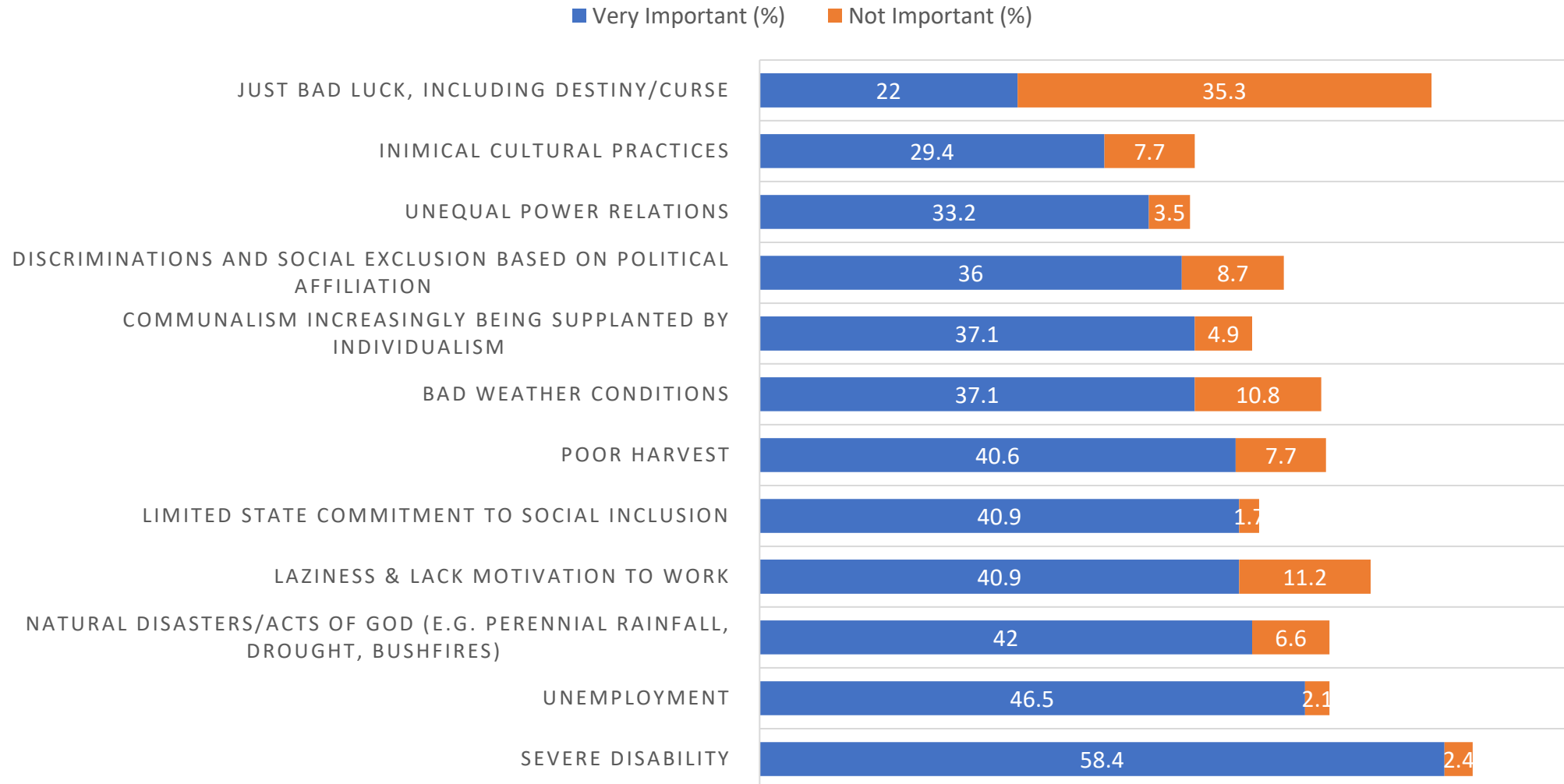


Perceptions on Poverty and Vulnerability

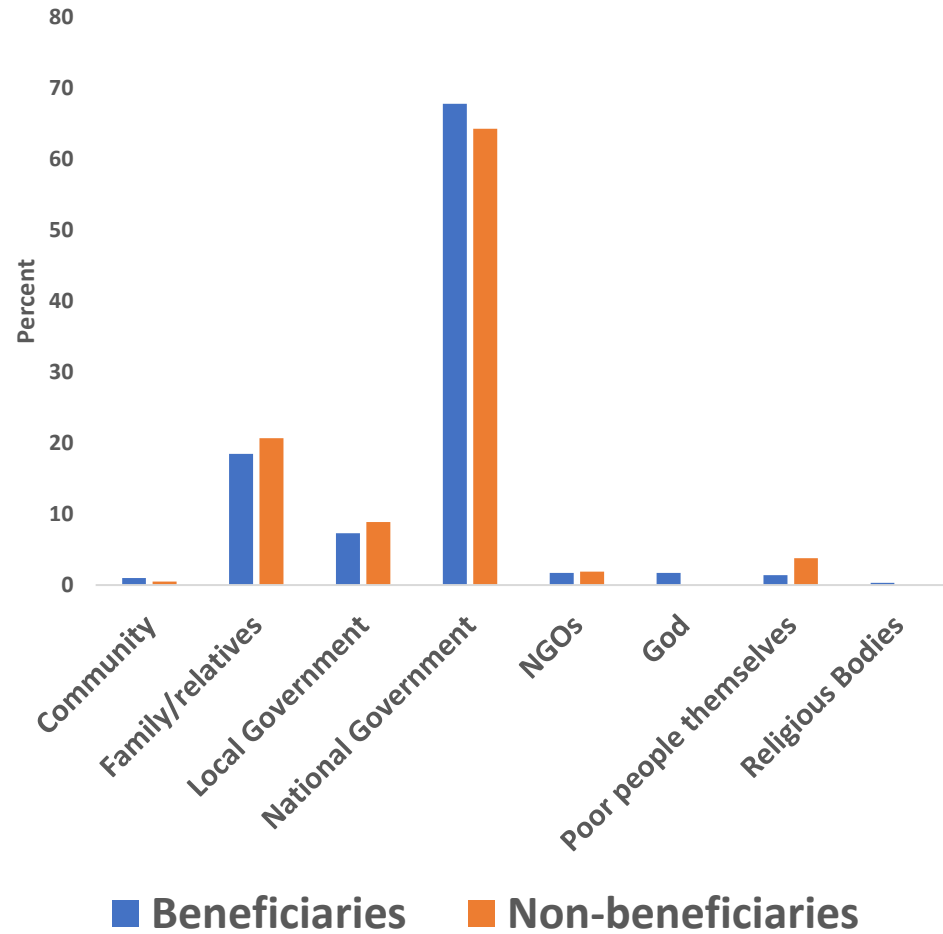


Perceptions of Poverty and Vulnerability

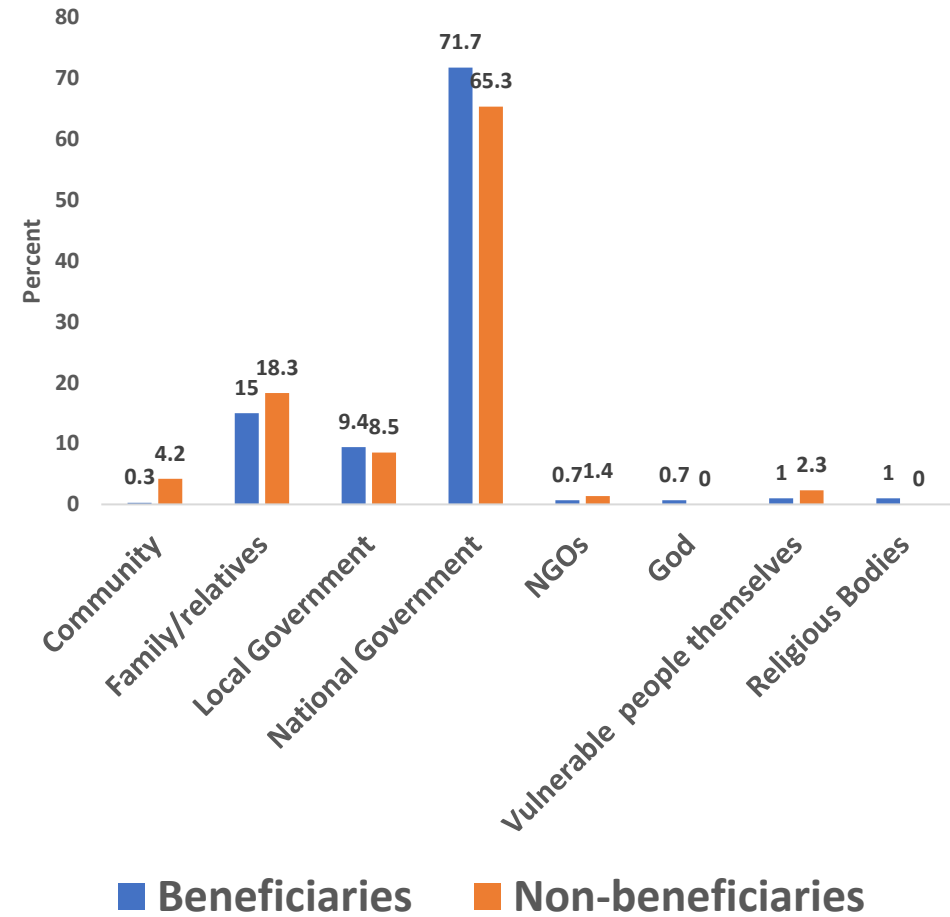
MOST COMMON FACTORS THAT RENDER PEOPLE VULNERABLE



Who has the primary responsibility to support the poor in your community?



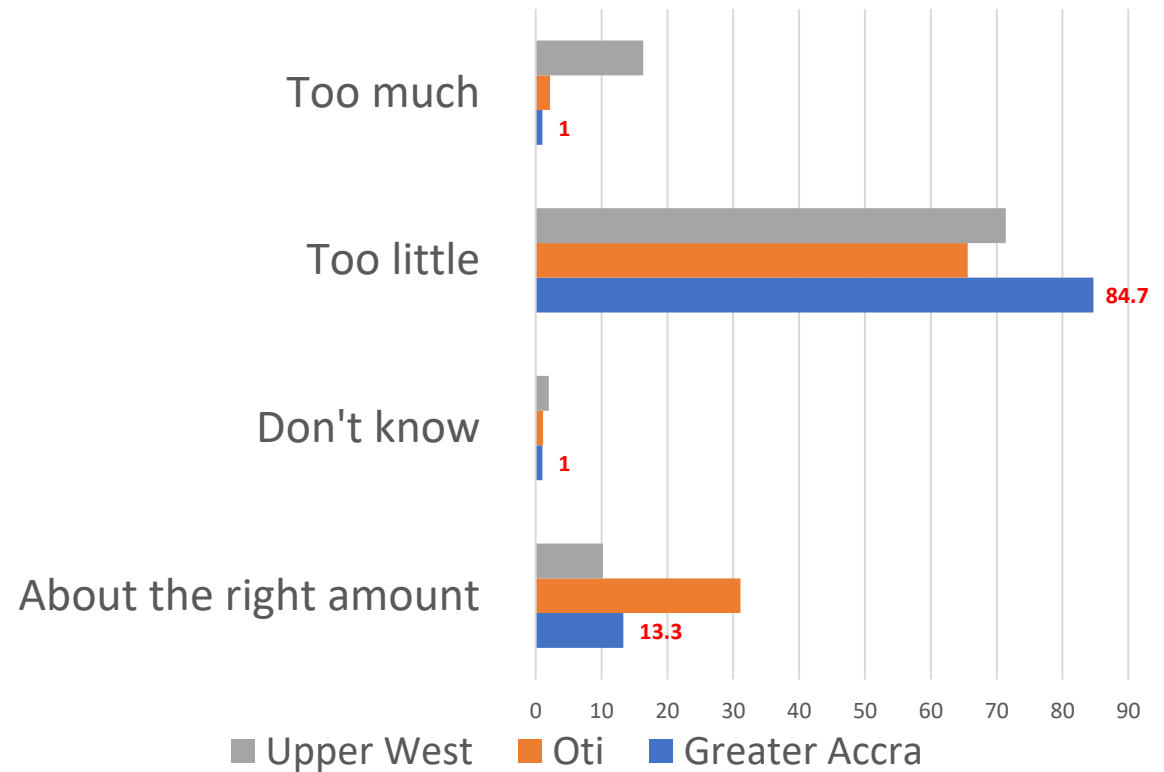
Who has the primary responsibility to support the vulnerable in your community?



Perceptions on government's level of investments towards the wellbeing of poor and vulnerable

	Beneficiaries		Non-beneficiaries	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
About the right amount	51	17.8	36	16.9
Don't know	4	1.4	10	4.7
Too little	212	74.1	153	71.8
Too much	19	6.6	14	6.6
Total	286	100	213	100

Regional assessment of government's investment in the poor and vulnerable



Knowledge and perception about SP

Broad agreement on desirability and viability of SP programmes, although pockets of misconceptions persists ('handouts', 'culture of poverty').

Generally limited understanding of social protection from a life cycle perspective

Understanding and awareness only limited to programmes where respondents are participants/beneficiaries. E.g. middle class respondents are more knowledgeable about SSNIT and NHIS

Concerns remain about programme quality/effectiveness

Political interference and clientelism: deep perceptions of patron-client logics for most social assistance programmes e.g. LEAP

Universal coverage a distant dream...

Generosity and promptness of benefits (e.g. LEAP)

- *They should be able to give them something reasonable to work with ... the allocations are rather small, you see... someone being given sixty-four Ghana cedis a month, what do you expect the person to do? He will just go and buy food with it. Ah, given the economic situation won't one possibly exhaust sixty-four in a day? (Social welfare officer).*
- *I think our social protection interventions are well intentioned and, in many respects, they represent a good effort but as we can all see, they are simply not able to provide the coverage that is needed and the quality of service (Academic Expert)*

Understanding and application of rights to SP

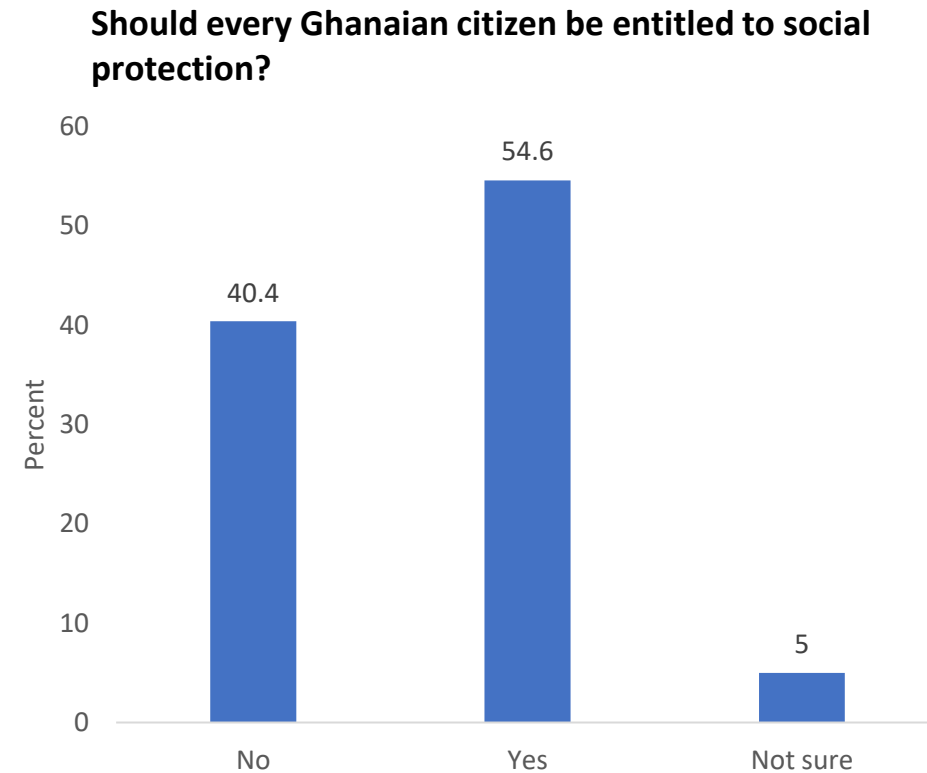
Among middle class/elites: mixed findings about understanding and perception of rights to social protection

[T]he extent to which you can push the rights argument is tricky... I think for the very basic things then yes. Education is a right and that is enshrined in our constitution but before the Free SHS could you go and stand somewhere and say that is a right, so I am taking the government to court? (Academic and poverty expert).

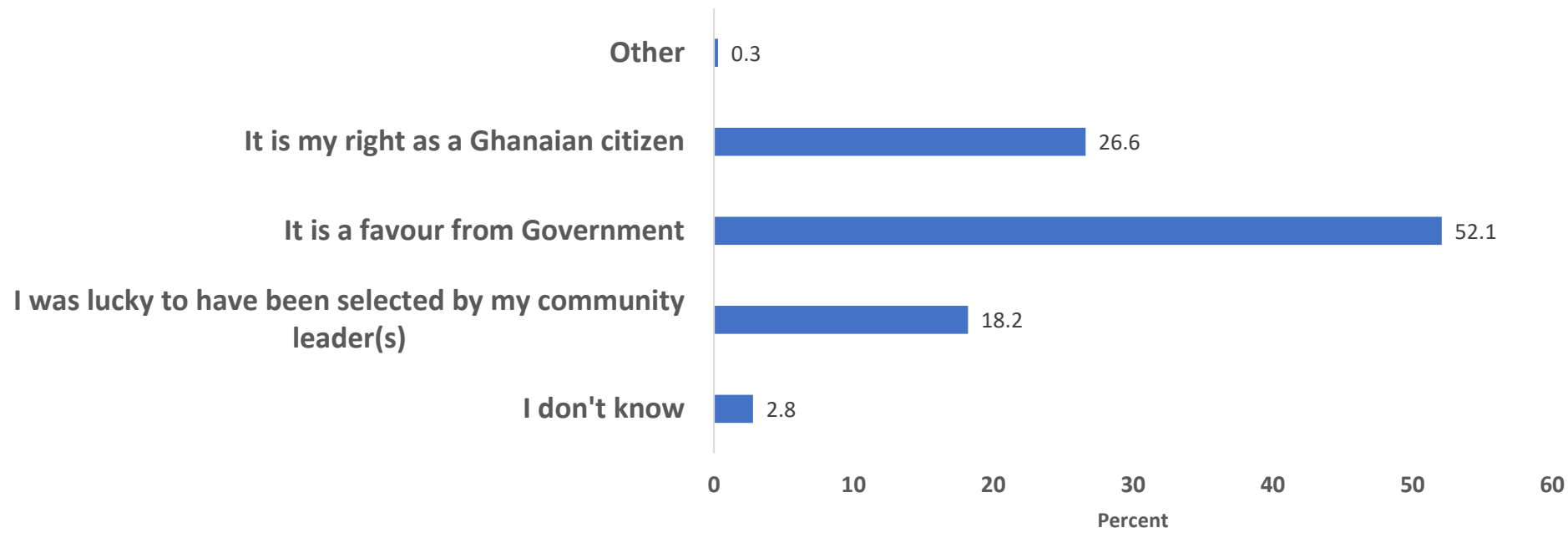
I do not come from a rights-based approach... [this is] not to say that I don't believe in rights ... I truly believe that you cannot discuss human rights when somebody is hungry. (Donor official).

Widespread perception among beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries about programmes being 'favours' from government

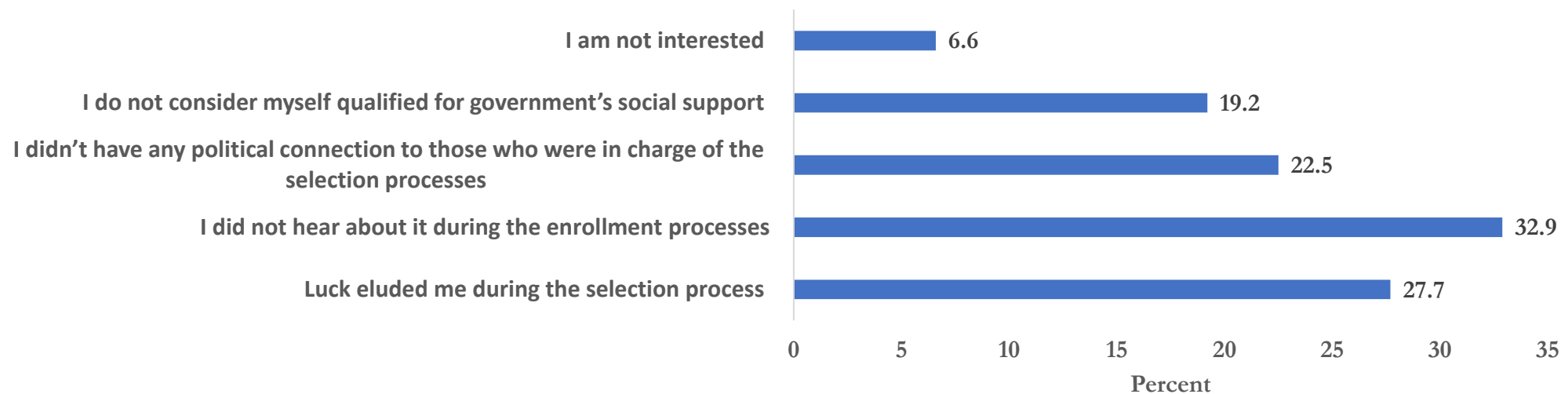
- SP largely understood in the context of social assistance



Why do you think you are benefiting from the social protection program of which you are part?



Why do you think you are not a beneficiary of any of government's social protection programs



Application of rights: the evidence

Unwillingness to express ‘voice’ despite evidence of grievances/concerns with implementation (e.g. delivery mechanisms, generosity of benefits etc.)

- Limited information on programmes: 42.6% of beneficiaries unaware of feedback mechanisms
- Fear of victimization
- Delays in case processing
- Focus on delivering benefits but near-absence of ‘intentionality’ (Adato et al., 2016) and rights-based messaging (see also Hunter and Sugiyama, 2014)

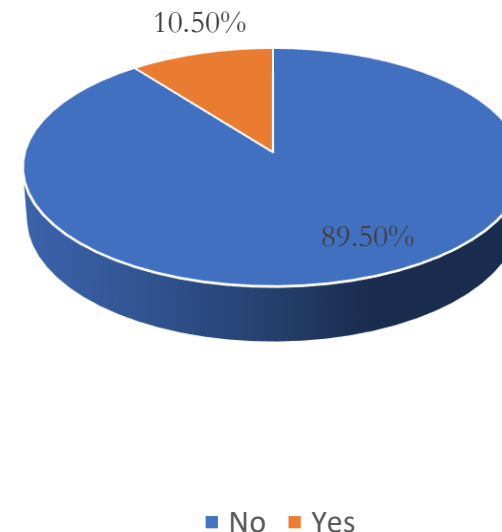
89.5% of NHIS subscribers dissatisfied with treatments but only 31% have ever taken action.

Findings reflect general lack of active citizenship in Ghana (Abdulai et al 2021; Sabates-Wheeler et al. 2020); More spectators beyond elections!

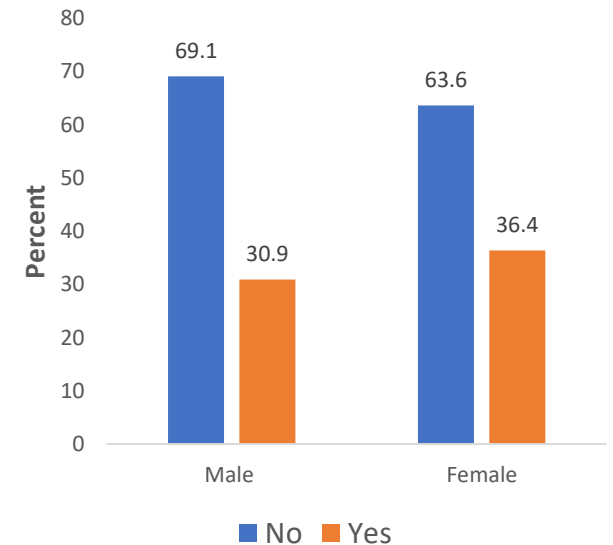
Are you aware of feedback mechanisms for SP?

	Beneficiaries	
	Frequency	Percent
No	132	46.2
Yes	154	53.8
Total	286	100

Satisfaction with NHIS

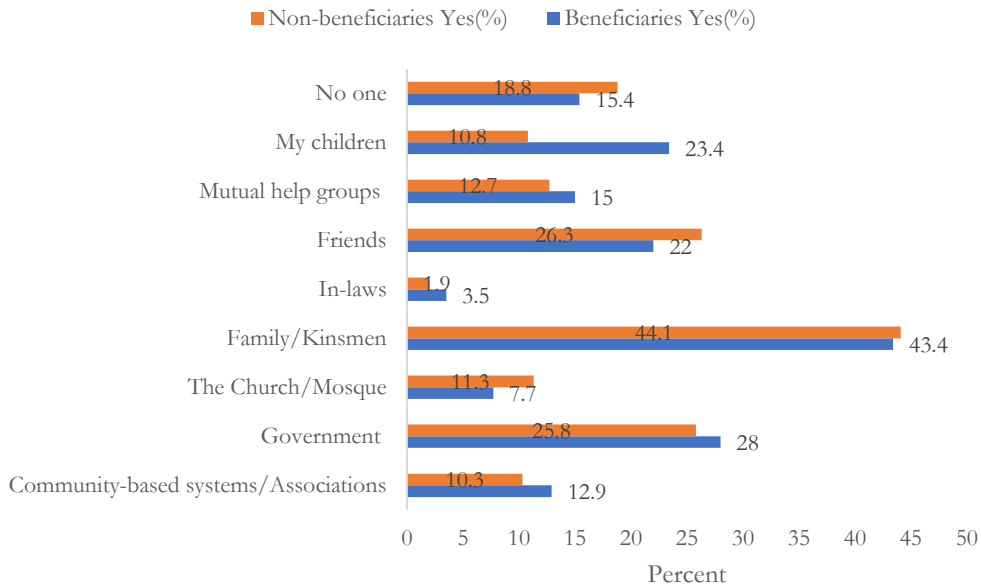


Action taken (gendered)



Socio-cultural norms and SP

In the past five years, whom have you normally turned to in times of need?

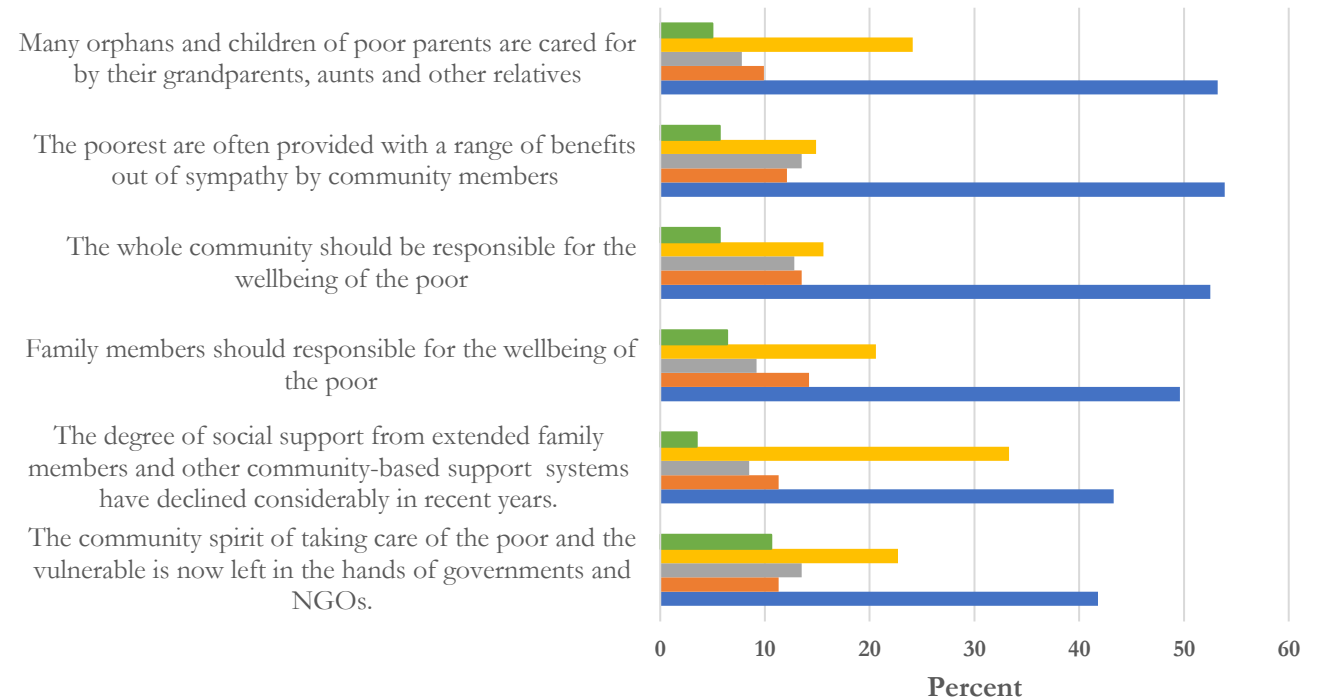


Widely-shared socio-cultural practices favourable to SP: reciprocity, gift-giving e.g. sadaqa;

- Family and relatives: first contact in times of need
- 85.1% of middle class feel obliged to support poor and vulnerable

Responsibility and assistance towards others

Strongly disagree Strongly agree Neutral Disagree Agree



“[responsibility to the poor and vulnerable] must not be transferred to an external agent (e.g. donors and NGOs)”

“[it is] a disgrace for family members to seek help outside their kingship networks.”

“[rendering support is] social insurance for myself and relatives”

Inimical socio-cultural practices and declining informal support

- ❖ Economic hardships and shift towards 'survival mode'
- ❖ Growing nuclearization and individualism
- ❖ Urbanization: "we-feeling" characteristic of traditional rural life evaporating

Now people are more interested in having their individual homes, nuclear families and taking care of themselves and so on and so forth. With urbanization, a lot of these relationships are going down (Social protection expert).

The kind of compassion that people had in the past is different from what we are experiencing now. In the olden days, whenever I was in need I would go to my family head to seek for assistance; I will not finish with my plea yet he will quickly go into his room and bring the money to me. (Female Non-beneficiary, FGD – Kuntunse).

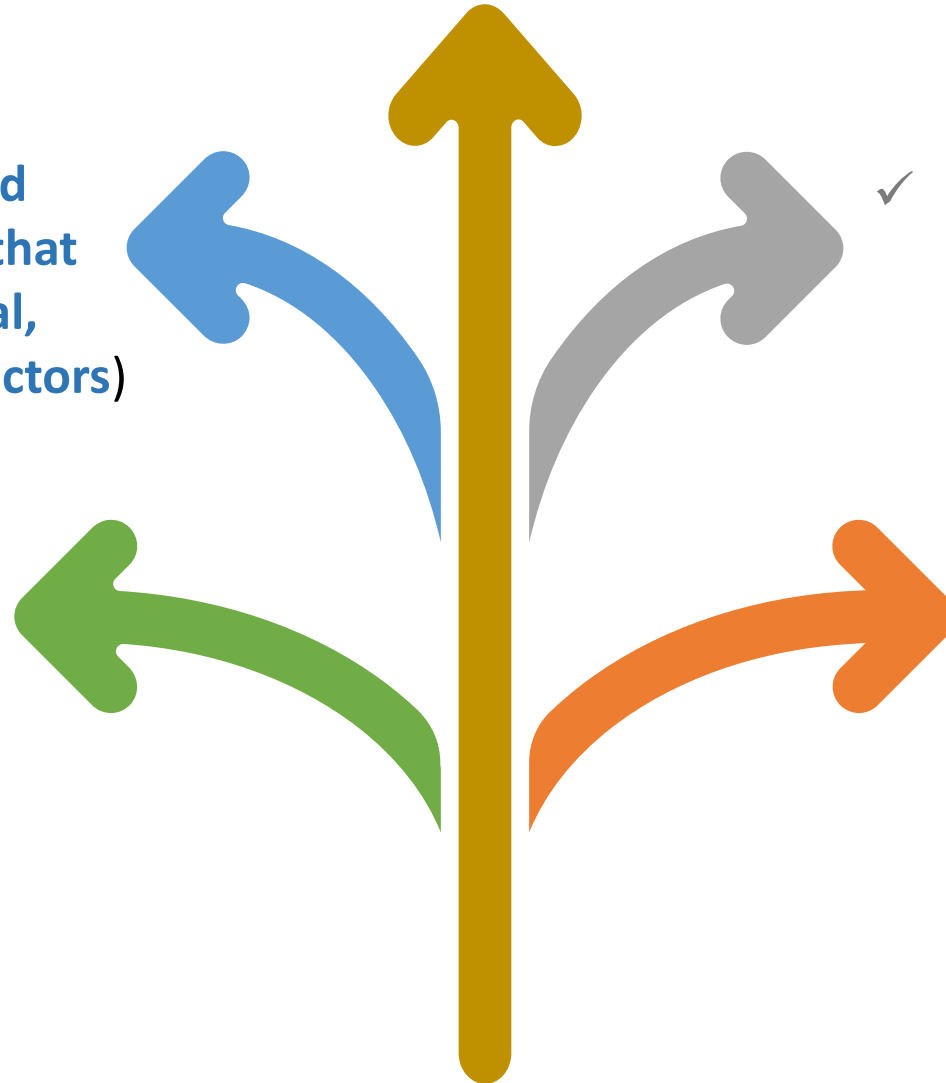
- ❖ 37% agreed or were neutral as to whether the "poor need spiritual intervention to get out of poverty"
- ❖ 40% often "withhold support to the poor because it will make them too dependent."
- ❖ poverty is seen as a curse (driven in part by sins committed by the poor themselves or by their forefathers), while spiritual intervention is seen as an escape route out of poverty.
- ❖ it is a taboo to offer support to some vulnerable populations, including the blind, leppers & cripples

Recommendations

(1) Need for advocacy efforts to be sensitive to both the public and policy elites on both internal and external causes of poverty and vulnerability

✓ distinguish between poverty and vulnerability e.g. using proxies that reflect contexts (e.g. urban/rural, farming communities/formal sectors)

✓ highlight potential risks faced across the life cycle to attract broad-based interests around social protection



✓ address 'culture of poverty' ideas associated with social protection

✓ understanding must reflect development planning processes: MTDPs, (composite) budgets of MDAs/MMDAs

Recommendations

(2) Rights-based objectives must be integral to design and implementation of SP programmes

(3) Public debate about targeting and clarity about fit with RBA framework e.g. focussing on those deemed most poor and vulnerable but currently lacking adequate SP (e.g. OVCs, the elderly and unemployed)

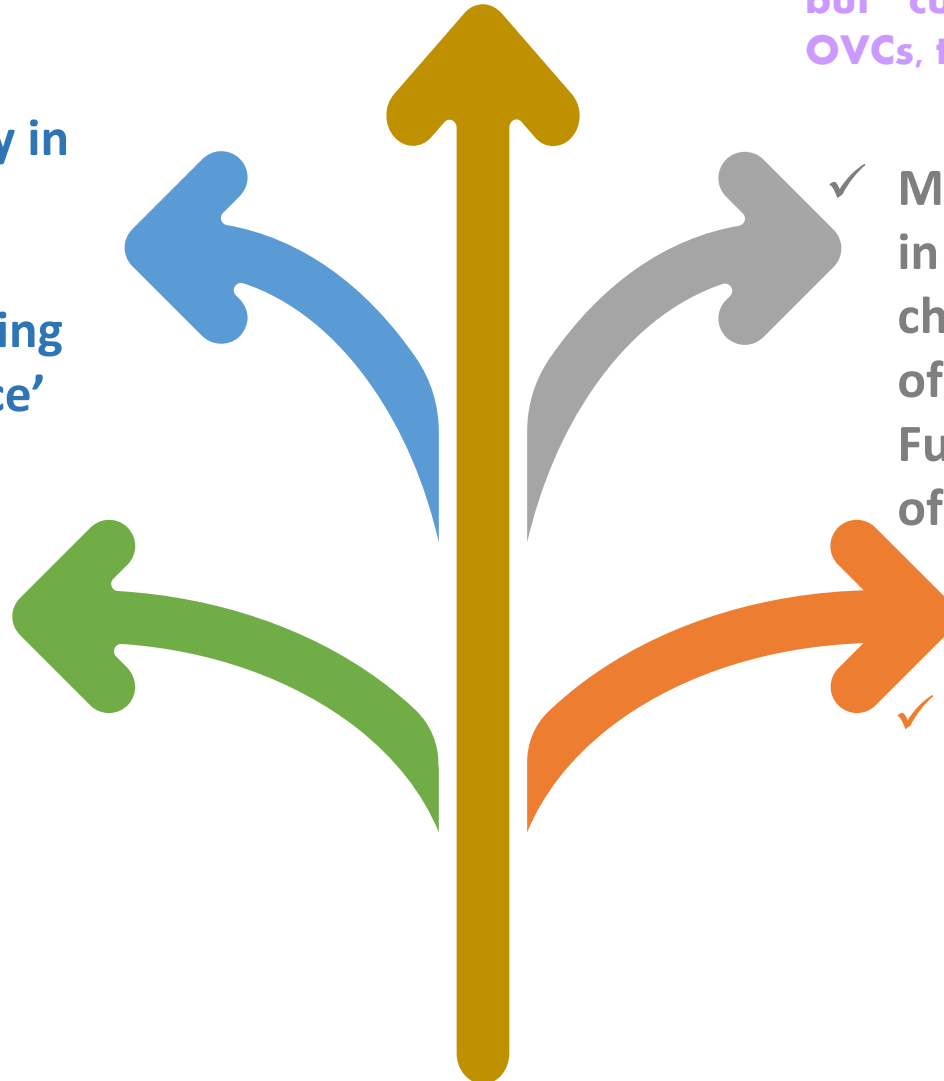
- ✓ Sustenance of and transparency in programme delivery; institutionalisation of *reliable* feedback mechanisms; addressing potential consequences of 'voice' expression

- ✓ Mainstreaming gender and disability in development processes remain a challenge despite official recognition of need e.g. limited coverage of PWD Fund, targeting mechanism and size of benefits

- ✓ Passage of SP Bill; integration of rights-based messaging crucial to delivery process.

- ✓ Appointment of SP Desk officers(?)

- ✓ Promotion of specific programmes and expansion of existing ones targeted at the poorest and most vulnerable



Recommendations

[4] **Qualitative improvement in existing programmes, focussing on creating and strengthening accountability mechanisms. Notably, high degree of dissatisfaction with NHIS a threat to removal of financial barriers and achievement of universal coverage objectives**

✓ **Advocacy areas: injection of resources and timely releases to beneficiaries/participants and service providers**

[5] **Avoiding one-size-fits all approaches: urban vs rural vulnerabilities e.g. high cost of living, (lack of/limited) access to water and sanitation, health and education in urban settlements.**

[6] **Application of 'hard' and 'soft' measures by development partners/non-state actors? Lessons from LEAP.**

Thank you