The Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare (MoPSLSW) – that administers social protection in Zimbabwe – was allocated US$174.24 million a meagre 1% upward difference from the US$172.51 million allocated in 2015.

Within the above amount, social protection services in particular, were allocated US$7.8 million in the 2016 Budget, representing 0.2% of total budget and 0.05% of GDP.

Cash Transfers were allocated US$2 million, translating to US$37 cents per targeted household in 2016, indicating an over-dependency on development partner support.

The El Nino related Food Deficit Mitigation Strategy (FDMS) was allocated US$500 thousand, far too insufficient to cover the projected 2.8 million food insecure people, the majority of which are children.

Education assistance in terms of school fee waivers was allocated US$10 million, again, far too little for the over 1 million children who need school fees assistance.

Government through partnership with UNICEF has developed a new Social Protection Policy Framework and Action Plan that needs to be implemented to help unlock resources and provide better sector coordination.
The Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare (MoPSLSW) is responsible for the social protection system in Zimbabwe. The Ministry’s priorities for 2016 include the following: increasing access to school fees waivers under the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) by needy primary school children, orphans and other vulnerable children (OVC); provision of probation services to OVCs, scale up support grants to Child Care institutions, scale up social cash transfers; and strengthening the welfare of persons with disabilities through provision of empowerment loans.

However, these priorities need to be funded and the 2016 allocation through the national budget leaves the social protection system vulnerable and dependent for the most part on already declining donor support towards social protection.

### 2016 Budget Allocation

The Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare was allocated US$174.24 million. The Ministry ranks 7th on overall allocations. However, of the US$174.24 million allocated, US$147 million (84%) is classified as Administration and General which will be spent on the public service medical aid scheme - Premier Service Medical Aid Society (PSMAS) and the government contribution to public sector employee pension contributions - National Social Security Authority (NSSA), US$120 million and US$27 million, respectively.

Training Centers and Labour Administration expenses accounts for 1.8% each, whilst Social Protection and Child Welfare & Protection Services were allocated 4.5% and 7.9%, respectively, (Figure 1).

This Brief focuses on the allocations to Social Protection and Child Welfare & Protection Services, whose programmes have a direct impact on the wellbeing of children in Zimbabwe.

The allocations for social protection and child protection services are insufficient, are predominantly carried out off-budget by development partners, and are unsustainable. And looking at some of the child protection indicators (Figure 2) underscores the challenge for children.

### Social Protection Services

The social protection services in Zimbabwe are quite comprehensive despite being under-funded and donor-dependent. Such services include cash transfers, assisted medical treatment orders, social assistance for the disabled, elderly, and food deficit mitigation strategy (FDMS).
Social Protection Services were allocated US$7.8 million in the 2016 Budget. This represents 0.2% of total budget and 0.05% of GDP. On a year-on-year basis, allocations to social services have been declining from the peak of US$38 million in 2012 to US$7.8 million in 2016, (Figure 3a). This is a worrying trend and is indicative of the government’s ‘substitute-budgeting’ practices in light of development partner appetite for social protection.

A significant portion of the budget allocation is earmarked for programmes with wage related costs account for 28.2% of the total budget, (Figure 3b). This is unlike other Ministries such as Education, wherein employment costs account for over 98% of the total budget. Seventy percent of the allocation is earmarked for programme support, whilst capital investments accounts for 1.9% of the 2016 allocation.

The 2016 budget allocation to the social welfare programmes amounts to US$4.74 million. The harmonized cash transfer (HCT) programme was allocated the largest share (US$2 million) of the paltry social services budget (Figure 4). With 504,000 households\(^1\) living in extreme poverty, the allocated amount is completely unrealistic.

As such, the burden of providing social protection has been shouldered by development partners, families and extended families. For example, UNICEF under the H SCT made cash transfers of US$9.9 million in 2015, benefiting 53,509 households almost five-fold the government budget of US$2 million.

Food Deficit Mitigation Strategy (FDMS) was allocated US$500 thousand. With an estimated cereal production short fall of 650,000 tones, the country is expected to have witnessed a 169% increase in food insecurity from 2014, hence, 1.5 million people are projected to be affected by the drought\(^2\). As is normally the case in times of shortages, children are likely to suffer the most.

\(^1\) According to PICES 2011/2012, 62.6% of the population are deemed poor, whilst 16.2% are in extreme poverty.

\(^2\) Zimbabwe: Food Insecurity, Office of the UN Resident Coordinator Situation Update No. 2, of 13 Oct 2015.
Support to people living with disabilities was allocated US$700 thousand. However, with an estimated 900,000 people living with a disability, this would translate to US77 cents per person for the whole of 2016.

Budget Execution for Social Protection Services Programmes

On account of fiscal space constraints, actual budget utilization in social services has been below budget allocations. For instance, by September 2015, disbursements to programmes under Social Services averaged 65.5% of the allocated amounts. Disbursements to support people living with disabilities were at 94.3%, health assistance (76.3%), support to elderly people was at 66.7% whilst only 20.6% had been disbursed under the FDMS allocation, (Figure 5).

Child Welfare and Protection Services

The Government in the 2015 Budget introduced the Child Welfare and Protection Services, as a stand-alone sub-vote in the MoPSLSW. Programmes under this sub-vote include: the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM), Children in difficult circumstances; Children on the Street Fund and support to Government Child Protection Institutions. These programmes were previously classified under the Social Protection sub-vote.

Child Welfare and Protection Services was allocated a total of US$13.78 million, about 0.3% of the total Government budget and 0.1% of GDP. The 2016 allocation is 28.1% higher than the US$10.75 million allocated in 2015. The increase in the allocation is mainly on account of scaling up of the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM), whose allocation rose from US$7 million in 2015 to US$10 million for 2016.

The increased allocation to BEAM is commendable, but is however still insufficient to meet the needs of most children. BEAM is designed to benefit all school-going age children (6-19 years) who are from resource constrained families and who have been failing to be in school owing to household financial constraints. BEAM assists children at both primary and secondary levels in both rural and urban areas, with tuition, levies and examination fees.

BEAM is the major programme under Child Welfare and Protection Services, accounting for 87.8% of the programmes allocation and 72.6% of the total Child Welfare and Protection Budget. BEAM provides assistance for tuition fees, levies, and examination fees to OVCs through block grants transferred directly to schools. A total of 77,885 primary and secondary school children were assisted with school fees and 11,957 were assisted with examination fees through BEAM in 2015. This is against an estimated total of 900,000 children requiring BEAM support.

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Other programmes under Child Welfare and Protection Services accounts for a combined share of 12.8% of the total programmes allocation. These includes: Children in difficult circumstances - allocated US$200,000.00, Children in the Street Fund allocated US$5,000.00 and support to Government Child Protection Institutions – US$800,000.00, (Figure 6). These allocated amounts remain significantly short of the requirements.

**Conclusion**

- The weak macroeconomic performance, coupled with constrained fiscal space is limiting the levels of public investments in social sectors in general, and Social and Child Protection in particular. With increased expenditure pressures, particularly on wage bill and some unbudgeted and inescapable expenditures such as response to the current drought, public spending in Social and Child Protection is likely to suffer from under-funding.

- Whilst the Government continues to explore options of growing the economy and hence its fiscal space, development partner support in social sectors remains important in the short-to-medium term. However, this off-budget support is not sustainable into medium-long term, and fiscal resources have to be improved and re-directed towards social protection.

- The adoption of a new Social Protection Policy Framework and action plan, may help unlock resources and provides better sector coordination. This should be informed by studies to cost the minimum package of social protection, which is important for government planning and budgeting. Similarly, such evidence will inform the basis for resource mobilisation, including from development partners.

- The new Social Protection Policy Framework further provides a great opportunity to harmonise social protection, to better coordinate the sector, mobilise resources and contribute towards systems strengthening in social protection.

- Thorough cost modelling of social protection in Zimbabwe is required to ascertain the fiscal implications. Further, it is important to assess the cost of doing nothing and strengthen advocacy for social protection prioritization within the political and economic decision-making circles.
### LIST OF ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BEAM</td>
<td>Basic Education Assistance Module</td>
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<tr>
<td>HCT</td>
<td>Harmonised Cash Transfers</td>
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<tr>
<td>MoPSLSW</td>
<td>Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare</td>
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<tr>
<td>OVC</td>
<td>Orphans and Vulnerable Children</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<td>PSMAS</td>
<td>Premier Service Medical Aid Society</td>
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<td>NASSA</td>
<td>National Social Security Authority</td>
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