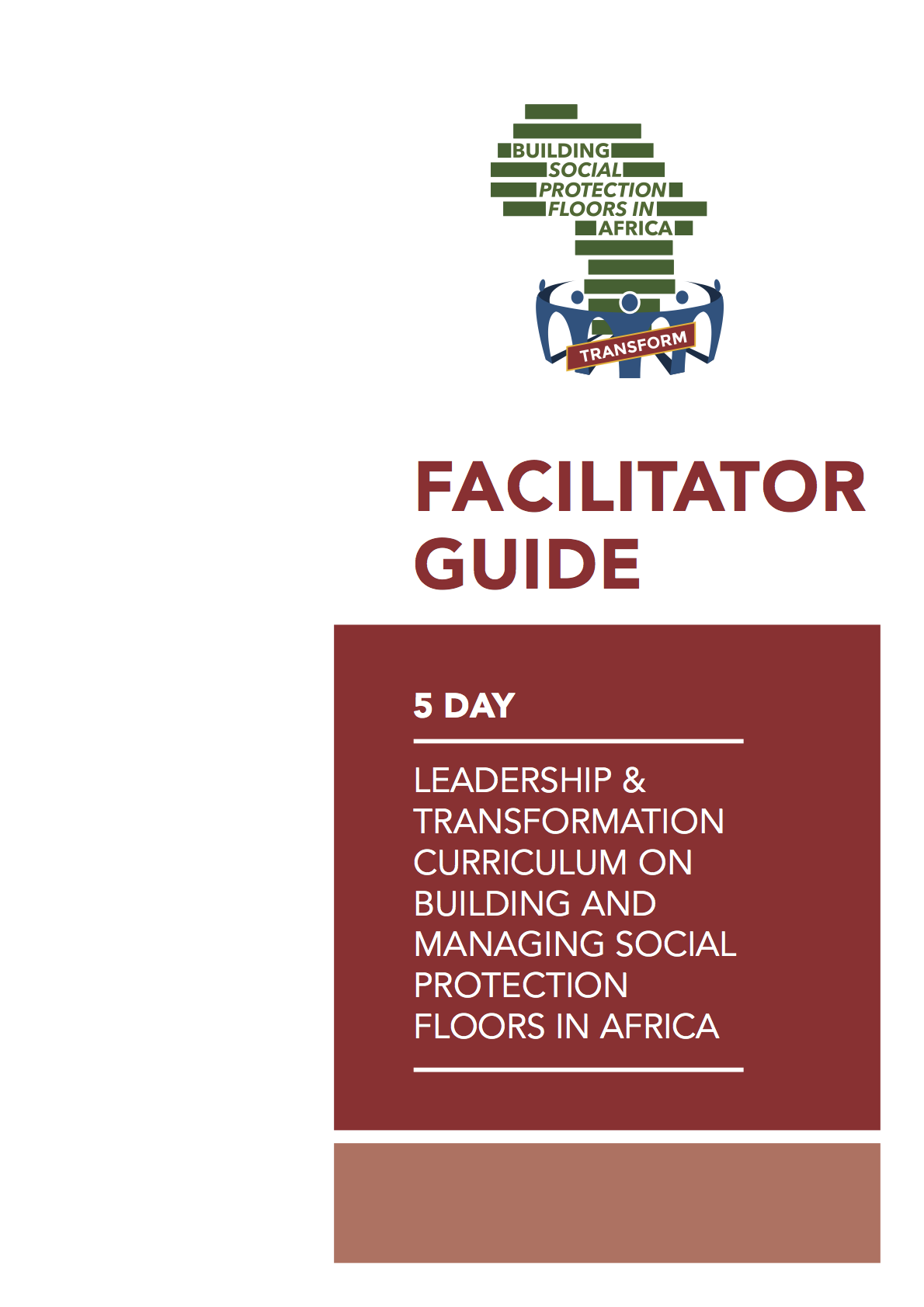


**ACTIVITY GUIDE**

**Day 4**

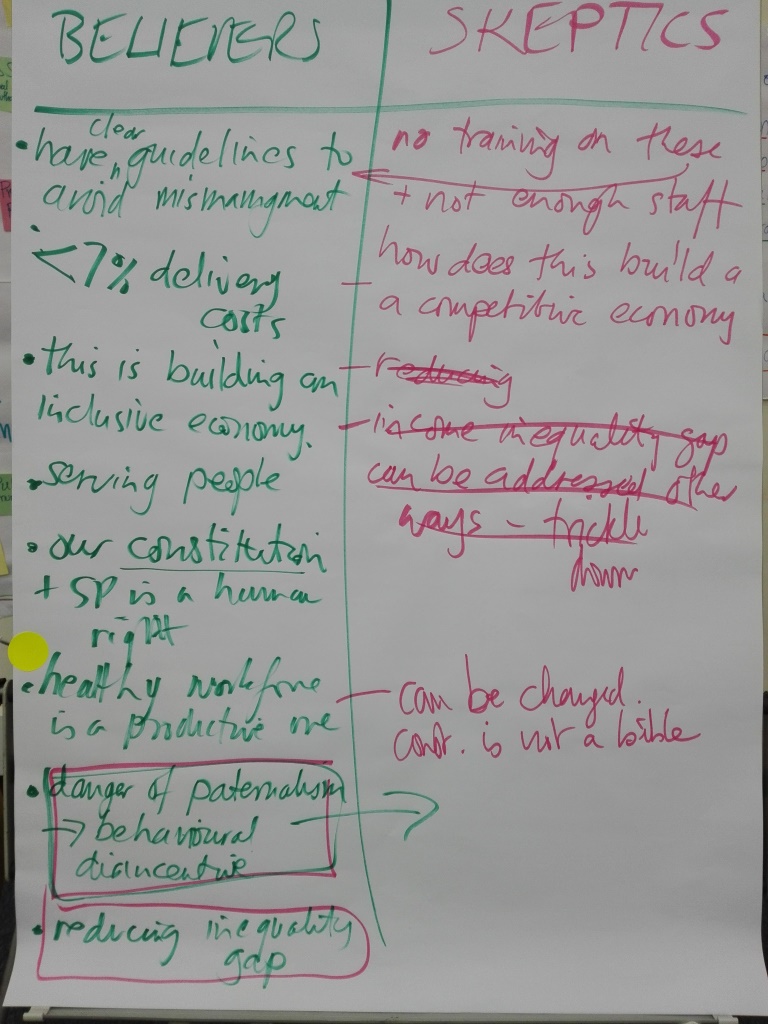


MIS and

FINANCE

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| **Mythbusters (program level – then same for integrated level but different cards)**  **Purpose:** To elicit current thinking about program MIS and start to have discussions that can change beliefs around program MIS  **Process:** Form four groups and hand each group three Mythbuster programme level cards (cards 1-12 of the Mythbuster programme level card deck). Explain that they have 2 minutes to discuss each statement and decide whether it is a truth or myth stating reasons for their belief.  **Debrief (what):** Referring to the answers outlined below, go through the Programme MIS Mythbuster slides asking each group who discussed that particular myth what they decided and why. Guide them according to your answers. (Same process for integrated level but different cards and slides).  **Learning Debrief (so what, now what):** elaborate on any golden threads in terms of the issues that most raised discussions within the groups. Why did we hold those beliefs? Ultimately, what we have learned is that information systems are not technical fixes, but ‘human systems’ that should be designed to respond to specific needs**.** | | |
| **MYTHBUSTER CARDS I: PROGRAM MIS** | | |
| **CARD NUMBER** | **STATEMENT** | **ANSWER** |
| 1 | You don’t necessarily need an electronic MIS for a Social Protection System. | True – you can run a social protection programme purely on paper with no digitization or using a very basic Excel-based database (however, this is much less effective) |
| 2 | An MIS is a database | False - MISs are an application software that helps to input, extract and transform data from programme databases |
| 3 | Management Information Systems are a simple way to improve SP program processes | False - not simple! Very complex to set-up, though of course they do simplify life hugely once they are adequately up and running |
| 4 | The design of an MIS can be fully outsourced to IT developers | False - interactive, modular, ongoing process and strong ownership and support needed from programme team |
| 5 | Your MIS solution should be context specific | True – importing solutions from elsewhere is unlikely to work in your context as your programme MIS needs to respond to your needs |
| 6 | Programme MISs always support all of the SP administrative functions, including: registration and enrolment of beneficiaries, payments/delivery, complaints and appeals, monitoring and evaluation, conditionality compliance, etc | False - they support the functions they have been programmed to support, nothing more than that. |
| 7 | Programme MISs ensure transparency and good governance of Social Protection Programmes | True – for example, they enable a streamlined process for beneficiary data validation/verification and for payment reconciliation |
| 8 | Databases linked to an MIS need to store huge amounts of data in order to be useful | False - they only need to collect/store data that is essential to programme functioning. Important to clearly set informational requirements from the start. |
| 9 | In remote areas where there is limited internet access, an MIS will not work | False - there are options for such contexts, including batch-sending (via CD, USB,etc) programme info when needed etc. This does not mean the rest of the system should not be run through an MIS. |
| 10 | An MIS can really support decision making and management but it needs to be carefully designed to do this | True – it will only support decision making and management if it has been designed to do so (e.g. correct reports pre-programmed to be accessed at the click of a button) |
| 11 | Depending on your country’s institutional, technological and operational considerations, international best practice may not be the appropriate solution when designing an MIS | True – while other countries may have more complex and sophisticated systems that achieve a lot, these may not be appropriate to your context (e.g. low capacity, lack of national ID, etc) |
| 12 | Once your MIS is designed, no further design work is necessary | False - requires continuous change depending on policy changes and user testing etc… That is why open source and capacity building is important! |

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| **MYTHBUSTER CARDS II: INTEGRATION** | | |
| **CARD NUMBER** | **STATEMENT** | **ANSWER** |
| 13 | There is only one key approach to use when developing an Integrated System for Information Management and that’s the Social Registry | False – depending on the objectives of integration pursued and the country set-up, other options may be more appropriate (e.g. Integrated beneficiary registry) |
| 14 | Regardless of the selected approach to integration (e.g. social registry vs integrated beneficiary registry), a government will be able to have an overview of who receives what in terms of a grant | False - only possible within an integrated beneficiary registry unless there are explicit data sharing agreements between individual programmes and social registry |
| 15 | Integration is mainly a policy issue requiring political and institutional arrangements rather than technical “fixes” | True – no IT company will ever be able to design a system that responds to government needs, unless government leads the process. The choices that will inform design are also highly political and involve coordination with many different stakeholders (information is power) |
| 16 | Integration across the Social Protection Sector increases risks to data privacy and security | True – the more data is integrated across a wide range of data sources, the higher the risks of misappropriation and misuse (imagine a malevolent dictator having access to data on every possible aspect of a citizen’s life). That is why many high-income countries, as UK, have not allowed interoperability. |
| 17 | If a country does not have 100% of population with national ID they will not be able to integrate data and information management for social protection as there will be no unique identifier for data-matching. | False - there are solutions countries have found to the problem of low ID coverage (see Base Document section 4.7.1). For example, using data matching algorithms (though this complicates integration!) |
| 18 | In an integrated system, all linkages between databases are bi-directional | False - often these links are not bi-directional (depends on data sharing agreements) and non-digital (batch-sending) CDs rather than web service) |
| 19 | An MIS is the backbone of the effective implementation of Social Protection Programs | True – If your information is not well managed - through a paper based or electronic MIS, your social protection program or system will not be effective |
| 20 | What matters most when creating an integrated system for information management is the level connectivity, interoperability and linkages between different systems; NOT the creation of a super-sized registry | True - The most important aspect of integration is ensuring that information from different programs ‘talks to each other’. A supersized registry is not the aim of integration |
| 21 | The aim of developing an integrated system for Information Management should be to ensure a more equitable, responsive and efficient delivery of service | True – That’s your ultimate goal of integration |
| 22 | It’s not possible to integrate your program MISs if they are paper based | False – Integration is merely the process of one piece of information, informing another. Of course this can be done if the information is on paper, in exactly the same way as it’s done if the information is electronic. What do you think happened before the invention of computers? |

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**Sceptics and believers**

**Purpose:** For participants to experience the ‘other side’ of a position and to find merit in it as well as practice how to speak to different perspectives around SP being a mere expenditure or investment more persuasively

**Preparation:** Set-up two flip chart stations with an approximately 3m long masking tape line facing the flip chart to divide the sceptics side from the believers side so they face each other (as two opposing teams)

**Process**: Divide participants into two groups. Ask each group to divide their flip chart into a sceptics and believers column and appoint a note taker and facilitator. Ask participants in the group to split up and start off somewhere on either the Sceptic or Believer side, and explain that each side will be taking turns to contribute their views with the time allocated to them relating to the statement presented on the slide. Participants may switch sides (between arguing from the Sceptic and the Believer side as many times as they wish as long as they do when it is that side’s turn to contribute their views and arguments. It is not about “being” a Believer or a Sceptic, but “arguing” from that perspective.

Introduce the statement on the slide *“Social protection is not only expenditure but also investment, the Finance Ministry should therefore increase their budget for redistribution”* and invite groups to get organised and start with the activity.

Each group’s facilitator must manage time, take notes and allocate turns to the different sides as follows:

6’ Sceptic side - 6’ Believer side - 6’ Sceptic side – 6’ Believer side

**Debrief:** Debrief in plenary inviting each groups’ facilitator to present their points and checking whether the two groups have made similar points, and how sceptics were being convinced by believers. Below (in no particular order) is an incomplete set of possible points that may come up for illustration and preparation purposes only.

**Learning debrief (so what, now what):** sceptics’ opinions are deep rooted, and we may have some of these as well – despite being SP practitioners – evidence is not enough to convince people. We need to be able to fully understand their positions in order to reason with them, touching those ‘buttons’ which will resonate.

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| **Sceptics** | **Believers** |
| * Creates a breeding ground for corruption * Unaffordable * Does not build a competitive economy in a globalized context * Fosters dependency and laziness * Huge training initiatives are required before this can even begin to have a hope of starting – don’t have the resources * The income gap/inequality can be addressed in other, better ways - by ‘trickle-down’ economics * SP can be changed or repealed – our constitution isn’t a ‘bible’ * Increases the danger of paternalism and creates a behaviour disincentive * Creates a bloated bureaucracy that becomes an unproductive drain on state resources | * Clear guidelines to avoid mismanagement can be put in place and strictly and transparently monitored * Typically, efficiency can occur * SP builds an inclusive economy * Research shows that SP actually feeds and grows the economy and decreases poverty and dependency * SP serves people, our most vulnerable fellow citizens, and arguing against it lacks political will and ultimately could be political suicide * SP is a human right * A healthy, able and engaged workforce is a productive one |

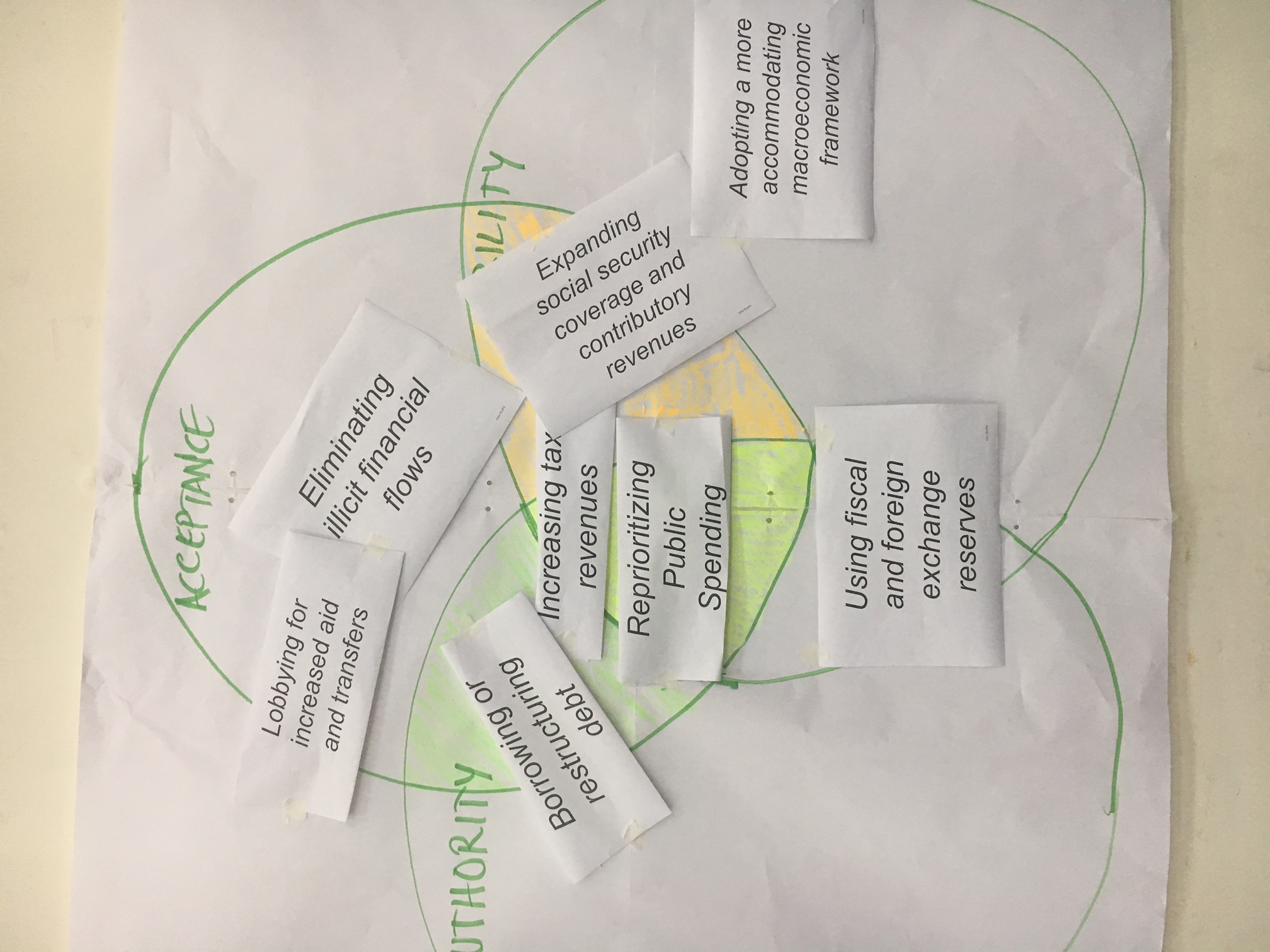
**Learning debrief:** Ask participants to share an important mind shift, and where and how they intend to use it in their current work environment.

**Triple ‘A’ activity: Expanding the fiscal envelope**

**Purpose**: To reflect on the barriers and enablers to expanding the financial envelope from a political economy perspective – assessing real feasibility and achievability of 8 different options.

These are the **Triple A Cards** containing financing options to be used:

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| Lobbying for increased aid and transfers | Reprioritising public spending |
| Eliminating illicit financial flows | Increasing tax revenues |
| Borrowing or restructuring debt | Using fiscal and foreign exchange reserves |
| Adopting a more accommodating macroeconomic framework | Expanding social security coverage and contributory revenues |

**Preparation:** Tape 2 flipchart sheets together (portrait orientation to obtain a large square) and draw the three interlocking circles on them, giving each circle a name: **ACCEPTANCE, AUTHORITY, ABILITY.** Post this poster on the wall for all participants to be able to gather in front of it during this activity.

**Process**: Invite participants to study the slide with the three interlocking circles of Acceptance, Authority, and Ability. Explain each using questions within the boxes as a guide. Then divide into 8 groups (of 2-3 participants) and distribute once card (containing one potential financing solution) per group. Invite them to read the full meaning of that solution – and others for their reference – on pages 22-23 of the Finance document. Then ask them to discuss within their small group where within the three circles that solution could fall – given their country context.

**Activity Debrief:** Invite each group to stand up and present their ‘answer’ to the plenary, sticking their card on the spot within the circles they have chosen. Ask whether others in the room agree or disagree… get a debate going! Once all eight options have been assessed, see whether there are any in the central ‘sweet spot’ and ask whether those appear to be truly feasible… and whether they should therefore be prioritised?

**Learning Debrief (so what, now what):** Ask participants to share their views as to how they could go about actioning the prioritised solutions in their SP system. What are the first steps they can undertake that are within their own realm of control.

**What’s the Essence?**

**Purpose**: A fun yet intensive way to engage with a learning text.

**Process**: Have all participants read the Finance document, section 3 (pages 31-36, on budget programming and budget process). The intention during the first reading is to highlight or underline parts that appear key aspects of the text. Then each pair is to prepare a 32 to 40-word summary that captures the ‘essence’ of the text. If they have time, a pair can join another pair and the four of them can try reducing it to 16 to 20 words. Hear from a few groups on what they have written.

**Learning debrief**: What key insights have you gained regarding budget programming and budget process, and how do you intend to act upon them back once you’re back at work?