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Selective inclusion in cash transfer programs: Unintended consequences for social cohesion

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Debates over universal versus selective or targeted provision of benefits in social protection programming have gained traction in recent years. In some cases, poverty targeting has been found to benefit communities, creating positive economic spillover effects even for non-recipients. However, targeted programs can also reconfigure social relations, carrying a social stigma that bifurcates communities. Drawing from rich qualitative data from a cash transfer program in Chad, we explore both the economic and social implications of targeting in cash transfer programs in contexts with widespread poverty. We find significant positive economic effects on non-beneficiaries. At the same time, not only does participation engender considerable social costs, but several punitive and economic costs arise for recipients as a result of their inclusion in the program, with repercussions for the transfer’s productivity. We conclude that in contexts where everyone is poor, targeting can create new fissures within a community, stemming from a combination of jealousy and skepticism with regard to the perceived deservingness of transfer recipients vis-à-vis other village inhabitants. When budgets are insufficient to cover all poor, the positive effects of cash transfer programs may be enhanced by reducing the geographic focus of social safety net programs to ensure all inhabitants can access benefits.

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1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic and rapidly accelerating climate change have created a number of recent setbacks for global poverty reduction efforts (WB, 2020). Rising poverty has led to an unprecedented expansion of social protection programs. In 2021 over $2.9 trillion have been devoted to social protection programs, representing about 3% of global gross domestic product (Gentilini et al., 2020; IPC-IG, 2021). The majority of this global spending has been devoted to social assistance, and in particular cash transfer programs, representing, respectively, 58% and 42% of total social protection spending. The coverage of cash transfer programs increased by over 200 percent relative to pre-COVID-19 levels, while their generosity doubled. Only a minority of cash transfer programs are being scaled up based on existing schemes; almost 69% of current programs are new (Gentilini et al., 2020; IPC-IG, 2021). While it is too early to know the extent to which temporary measures in response to COVID-19 will remain, it is likely that there will be permanent consequences that will shape social protection in the medium and longer term.

Despite these trends in social protection, expansions have been unequal across countries, with higher income countries generally expanding fastest (Gentilini et al., 2020). Indeed, the coverage of social protection in low-income countries remains patchy, and largely insufficient to cover needs, despite attention from global donors. These funding limitations in lower income countries engender difficult decisions over how social protection revenue should be dispersed, and who should be prioritized in targeting, leading to long-running debates among scholars and practitioners alike over the relative benefits of universal versus selective / targeted provision of benefits (Brown, Ravallion & van de Walle, 2019; Hanna & Olken, 2018; Banerjee, Niehaus & Suri, 2019; Gentilini et al., 2020). Such decisions can have crucial social, economic, and political consequences. In some cases, targeted social protection programs have been found to benefit communities at large, with a series of positive economic spillover effects even for non-recipients. However, selective inclusion can also reconfigure social relations. In some instances, targeting particular communities or populations can create new social hierarchies or provoke jealousy, tension, or animosity towards program recipients (Adato, 2000; Hochfeld & Plagerson, 2011; Mettler & Stonecash,
and then refusing to pay them back, included: non-recipients buying items from beneficiaries on credit sites were intended to foil beneficiary productivity. Examples criminatory practices pursued by non-recipients across all seven that impeded their ability to benefit maximally from their punishments directed against transfer recipients by non-recipients. Indeed, costs had direct repercussions for the transfer’s productivity. Indeed, while such strategies may demystify the selection process for members of the community, existing research shows that externally-derived selection mechanisms don’t always match community understanding of poverty and need. In many cases, the profiles of beneficiaries identified by PMT targeting may clash with the community’s understanding of poverty, leading to resistance and animosity stemming from decisions over selective inclusion. For instance, in Kenya’s Hunger Safety Net Program, communities sometimes rejected the results of the PMT, which were seen as inconsistent with the community’s understandings of poverty and vulnerability. While the PMT estimated household consumption, communities’ understandings of poverty emphasized multidimensional vulnerabilities, including lack of access to safe water and housing (Silva-Leander & Mertens, 2016).

We explore these dynamics through a qualitative evaluation of a cash transfer program implemented in the Republic of Chad between 2017 and 2019. The program relied on proxy-means-testing (PMT), a widely used method in low-income settings to identify beneficiaries. We examine the effects of targeting for social cohesion and intra-communal relations. In addition to conducting focus groups and informational interviews, we follow the logic of a regression discontinuity design to interview recipients and non-recipients just either side of the transfer eligibility cut off. We conducted research in seven purposively selected villages in the southern-central region of Logone. The program only provided benefits to around 40% of the population in this region, even though the vast majority of the population (98%) was living on less than $1.90 a day.

A recent study showed that the program significantly increased consumption and investment for participants overall, especially for women (Kandpal, Schnitzer, & Daye, 2021). Our qualitative research complemented these findings, identifying a number of positive spillover effects. Some recipients shared their transfers directly with family or neighbors, and some helped create community infrastructure. There was also a positive effect on local small businesses and the market for day labor, as transfer recipients had more cash to spend at market, employ laborers, and invest in household enterprises. Despite these positive effects, however, we found that targeting fostered considerable animosity and resentment within communities. Drawing from over 100 interviews and 14 focus group discussions with participants and non-participants of Chad’s cash transfer program, we find that, not only does participation engender considerable social costs, but, specifically, that several punitive and economic costs arise for recipients as a result of their inclusion in the program. Importantly, these costs had direct repercussions for the transfer’s productivity. Indeed, despite some positive economic spillovers for non-transfer recipients and households, many interviewees nevertheless described punishments directed against transfer recipients by non-recipients that impeded their ability to benefit maximally from their program-related activities. Referred to as “mévente,” deliberate discriminatory practices pursued by non-recipients across all seven sites were intended to foil beneficiary productivity. Examples included: non-recipients buying items from beneficiaries on credit and then refusing to pay them back, refusing to purchase at all from program participants, and charging program participants higher prices in the market. While transfer recipients commented on the economic repercussions of such practices, the divisive social implications were particularly concerning.

Building on earlier scholarship, we find that targeting can create new fissures within a community (Pavanello et al., 2016), stemming from a combination of jealousy and skepticism with regard to the perceived deservingness of transfer recipients vis-à-vis other village inhabitants. These fissures create social costs and economic implications that threaten to undermine overall program objectives.

We highlight two possible policy implications stemming from these findings, which are discussed briefly in turn in the conclusion. First, we suggest that where budgets are limited, then greater transparency regarding the criteria for inclusion could potentially ameliorate the uncertainty and speculation over reasons for inclusion, which might, under certain circumstances, assuage perceptions of injustice. However, while such strategies may demystify the selection process for members of the community, existing research shows that externally-derived selection mechanisms don’t always match community understanding of poverty and need. In many cases, the profiles of beneficiaries identified by PMT targeting may clash with the community’s understanding of poverty, leading to resistance and animosity stemming from decisions over selective inclusion. For instance, in Kenya’s Hunger Safety Net Program, communities sometimes rejected the results of the PMT, which were seen as inconsistent with the community’s understandings of poverty and vulnerability. While the PMT estimated household consumption, communities’ understandings of poverty emphasized multidimensional vulnerabilities, including lack of access to safe water and housing (Silva-Leander & Mertens, 2016).

In an effort to mitigate such reactions, other models have sought to place decisions over inclusion with the community itself. However, community-based approaches can engender related problems, sometimes reinforcing existing forms of social and economic marginalization. Mgenezuzu (2008) finds that community-based targeting (CBT) in Malawi largely manifested as a top-down process that engendered considerable social repercussions. While community-based models intend to honor local conceptualizations of poverty and “deservingness” (Grosh et al., 2008), they can be prone to manipulation (Premand & Schnitzer, 2021), thereby risking the exclusion of the community’s already marginalized members and reinforcing existing social divisions and cleavages.

Equally important to the perception of transparency is the perception of fairness. In a context where everyone is poor, a perception of fairness may be difficult to achieve if households that are also poor are excluded from the program. While program architects have sought to design targeting approaches that will be perceived as both transparent and fair among equally deserving populations, such as fully transparent public lotteries (Bance & Schnitzer, 2021), more research would be needed to examine whether such mechanisms are effective at ameliorating social tensions in contexts where everyone is poor.

The second policy implication we identify, therefore, is that where budgets are constrained, there may be considerable social benefits to reducing the geographic focus of social protection programs, to ensure all inhabitants can access benefits. While arguments for universal inclusion have been made in a variety of contexts on similar grounds – including in contexts with higher levels of inequality – we argue that such a logic proves particularly important in environments where the majority of inhabitants face material hardship. When everyone is poor, it can be unclear to residents why some participants are able to access benefits and others

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1 Author’s estimates based on a household survey implemented in 2017. Survey was representative of program areas and covered 1,653 households. Poverty estimate corresponds to the share of households whose consumption per capita was below the international poverty line of USD 1.90 a day.

2 This research was approved by the Ethics Review Committee at the London School of Economics and Political Science (REC Approval No: 1013). All interviews and focus groups cited in the text use pseudonyms in order to protect the anonymity of research participants.

3 Further research should also explore the extent to which the dynamics we identify in Chad’s national cash transfer program are present elsewhere, which fell outside of this project’s scope.
are not, which can exacerbate animosity and resentment. Similarly, when excluded households are in dire need of assistance, this can also encourage jealousy.

While potential positive and negative spillover effects emerging from targeting need to be carefully weighed in each case, we propose that the social and material repercussions that derive from selective inclusion may render targeting too costly. Our findings thus join a growing body of scholarship in making a normative, a social, and an economic case for universal inclusion in social protection programming (Mkandawire, 2005; Kabeer, 2014; Ravallion, 2019), even if budgetary constraints mean such programs reach more limited geographical areas. Indeed, in contexts of widespread poverty, the ‘universal’ provision of benefits within villages may be an effective way to reach vulnerable populations while avoiding the various direct and indirect costs associated with developing more complex targeting strategies (Schnitzer, 2019).

2. Social protection targeting and intracommunal relations

2.1. Background: Targeting mechanisms

Social assistance programming has relied on a variety of approaches ranging from ‘universal’ or more inclusive approaches, such as geographical or categorical targeting, to narrower poverty-based targeting. While in practice poverty targeting has usually dominated other approaches in social assistance programming, there has been increasing attention to more inclusive approaches and many countries as diverse as Finland and Kenya have introduced pilot programs providing benefits to entire communities (Gentilini et al., 2020). The COVID-19 response also involved many universal or nearly universal responses (such as in Israel, Korea, Japan, Serbia and Singapore). Proponents of more inclusive approaches have often justified the approach on the grounds that it is more effective, including because of the high errors resulting from targeting (Brown, Ravallion & van de Walle, 2018).

Targeting and inclusion in social assistance programs have long been the subject of extensive debate. Targeting has been justified for reasons including equity (necessary redistribution to a community’s poorest members), moral motives (providing assistance to the “deserving poor” only), and limited budgets (allows to reduce poverty in a cost-effective way by focusing resources on those who need it). The literature on targeting has largely focused on the extent to which different methods reach their intended populations (e.g. Coady & Skoufas, 2004; Coady, Grosh, & Hoddinott, 2004a; Coady, Grosh, & Hoddinott, 2004b; Del Ninno & Mills, 2015; Klasen & Lange, 2016; McBride & Nichols, 2018; Stoefller, Mills & del Ninno, 2016; Bah et al., 2019; Brown, Ravallion & van de Walle, 2018). But much less attention has been paid to the role of targeting on community dynamics, which are harder to capture through quantitative approaches.

Poverty targeting can take a number of forms. In low-income settings, PMT and CBT are among the most popular methods to identify beneficiaries of social safety net interventions. PMT seeks to use survey data or other indicators of poverty to identify those most in need and direct transfers to those populations. While PMT typically relies on survey-derived data aimed to identify households with low consumption per capita (Grosh & Baker, 1995), CBT places decisions over program inclusion with the community itself (Coady, Grosh & Hoddinott, 2004a; McCord, 2013). In contrast to PMT, and in an effort to mitigate mismatches between PMT algorithms and community understandings of poverty, CBT might take the form of public meetings, or designations of need by community authorities or elders (Coady, Grosh and Hoddinott 2004a). Although such models build on local knowledge of poverty and “deservingsness” (Grosh et al., 2008), they have also been accused of reinforcing patronage networks or being susceptible to manipulation. Precisely because they amplify existing community-level dynamics, they risk exacerbating existing divisions, rifts or conditions of marginalization within communities, while excluding those who are most vulnerable (Adato, 2000; Conning & Kevane, 2002; Mgmemzelulu, 2008; Hochfeld & Plagerson, 2011; Roelen, 2019).

Public lotteries are other mechanisms that have been used to select program participants, in combination with other targeting methods, in contexts where information is low, and the prevalence of poverty is high. While studies on lotteries as a targeting mechanism are nearly non-existent, descriptive evidence suggests that these may be considered as a more fair option than PMT and CBT methods (Bance & Schnitzer, 2021). Alternatively, program designers have opted for categorical or geographical processes of inclusion, providing benefits to all those who meet a particular set of criteria such as the elderly, or families with children (Bossuyry & Coudouel, 2018: 158). Finally, work requirements have been used in an effort to “filter out” those who are less in need (Besley & Coate, 1992). However, scholars have raised questions about the normative and economic justifications for such a mechanism (Alik-Lagrange & Ravallion, 2018).

2.2. Targeting and social cohesion

The current literature examining the effects of targeted versus universal safety net programs has largely focused on the economic and human development effects for recipients while often ignoring impacts on communal relations (Babajanian, 2012; Babajanian & Hagen-Zanker, 2012; Devereux et al., 2013; Dissanayake, Stephenson & Greenslade, 2012). Of the literature that focuses on communal relations, scholars highlight both positive and negative social dynamics (Druzca, 2015; Idris, 2017; Pavanello et al., 2016). Targeted safety nets have sometimes been found to boost social cohesion by addressing distributional inequalities in society through poverty reduction and improved access to basic services for marginalized groups (Babajanian, 2013). Studies in both Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa have found that targeted cash transfers can increase social capital through greater participation in family and broader community activities (Babajanian & Hagen-Zanker, 2012). In Kenya, scholars have linked greater community participation and resulting social capital to transfer recipients’ abilities to share food and repay loans (Ressler, 2008). Similarly, a study in Zambia observed positive effects for transfer recipients’ social standing within communities, as other members were more willing to lend them money with the knowledge of their greater capacity to repay (Wietler, 2007).

Conversely, a growing body of work has scrutinized the legitimacy and social cohesion effects of different targeting approaches, as well as associated spillover effects. These critiques largely revolve around the claim that selective inclusion creates stigma, jealousy, and other forms of social unrest, including stoking pre-existing intra-communal tensions (Babajanian, 2012; Idris, 2016).

For example, in Africa 77 percent of the spending on social assistance is on programs that rely on some form of poverty targeting (Beegle et al. 2018).
MacAuslan & Riemenschneider, 2011; Pavanello et al., 2016). A number of scholars have highlighted the social conflict, stigmatization, and resentment that selective targeting engenders towards program beneficiaries. In Indonesia, Cameron and Shah (2014) found that mis-targeting of transfer beneficiaries led to increases in crime and a decline in social capital within communities. Similarly, in Kenya, Haushofer, Reisinger, and Shapiro (2015) document the ways in which increases in neighbors’ wealth strongly decrease life satisfaction and moderately decrease consumption and asset holdings.

While targeted cash transfer programs can create societal tensions even in peaceful contexts, post-conflict or otherwise fragile contexts may be particularly vulnerable to ruptured social cohesion, in part due to pervasive conflict-related mistrust (Idris, 2016). Additionally, where targeting aligns with ethnic divisions, this can stoke pre-existing tensions (Idris, 2017), especially when social divisions were a salient feature of the conflict (Holmes, 2009). Some believe this to be an especially acute risk whenever targeting occurs in contexts where everyone is poor and program participants are only marginally poorer than those who were not selected (Idris, 2017). However, it should be noted that poverty and inequality levels are only one among several aspects that can trigger these dynamics; such dynamics can also emerge in middle- or high-income countries or in contexts with greater levels of inequality. Similarly, it is not necessarily the case that these dynamics will always emerge in contexts with widespread poverty.

Nevertheless, when animosities resulting from selective and exclusionary targeting emerge, not only can they introduce or reinforce social differentiation as seen in Mexico’s Prospera program (Adato, 2000), but the social stigma that participants carry has sometimes led to outright social exclusion of recipients (Hofchold & Plagerson, 2011; Roelen, 2019). In Kenya, Malawi and Zimbabwe, studies find that social stigma can result from targeting processes that lack transparency, which is an accusation often levied at proxy-means-testing (MacAuslan & Riemenschneider, 2011). These effects can manifest differently for differently situated communities and might be shaped by existing attitudes towards particular social groups or create new tensions and animosities.

In response to critiques of various targeting approaches, many scholars advance compelling arguments for universal inclusion in social protection programs (Gentilini et al., 2019). These arguments derive from both normative and empirical claims. From a normative perspective, Kabeer (2014) argues that key human rights instruments enshrine rights to housing, a basic income, and employment. Lautier (2006) similarly recognizes that a universal distribution of benefits, to which everyone contributes, forms a core part of the citizen-state social contract. Refuting accusations that universal inclusion in social protection programs reinforces existing privilege, its proponents have argued that it is, in fact, targeted approaches that reorganize and entrench privileges along arbitrary divides (Mkandawire, 2005). Supporters of universalist approaches argue they pay both productive and political dividends by increasing overall productivity and ensuring social stability (Esping-Andersen, 1990).

It is evident that decisions over inclusion or eligibility for program benefits are hugely consequential. Not only do they create the potential for new grievances, but they can map onto preexisting relationships and tensions within communities that reinforce divisions among dominant and marginalized groups. Far from being apolitical, the social costs that can emerge from different approaches can serve as a counterweight against the economic benefits that targeting promises.

Although previous research has highlighted that targeting in social assistance programs can engender negative effects (e.g. Baird, De Hoop & Özler, 2013; Cunha, De Giorgi, & Jayachandran, 2019; Filmer et al., 2018; Haushofer & Shapiro, 2018; and McIntosh & Zeitlin, 2018), how and why this manifests in different communities can be notoriously difficult to capture (Baird et al., 2014). This article makes a key contribution to the literature by leveraging rich qualitative data, including focus groups, interviews and embedded approaches, to explore the complex and multifaceted implications of targeting on social cohesion in a context where everyone is poor. We find stronger community frictions than prior studies, which in turn led to economic repercussions for program participants.

3. Chad’s cash transfer Program: Background and context

Chad has among the highest poverty rates and lowest human development outcomes in the world. Almost half of the population fall below the poverty line (47 percent), and Chad ranks 185 out of 188 on the Human Development Index. In the past decade Chad has experienced increased economic pressures from lower oil prices, elevated regional insecurity, increased numbers of refugees, and climate change (Beltramo et al., 2020). These events negatively affect the already limited access of the poor population to livelihood opportunities. Furthermore, government capacity to provide basic social services including health, education and safety nets is limited, and these sectors rely heavily on international assistance.

In 2016, the Government of Chad, with the support from the World Bank and the United Kingdom (through the Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Program), piloted a cash transfer intervention aimed at the country’s poorest households, to lay the foundations for an adaptive safety nets system. Given that most existing cash and food transfers at this time were implemented by a range of non-governmental agencies, this pilot project offered the government an opportunity to develop a public safety net and increase its capacity for the future expansion of social welfare programming. The project was rolled out in the regions of Bahr-el-Gazel in the Sahel and Logone Occidental in the Sudanian region. In both regions, levels of chronic poverty and malnutrition are among the highest in the country. The focus was on rural areas wherein small, regular, and timely, transfers were made to poor women with children under the age of 12 years and/or pregnant women. The transfers were distributed with the aim of increasing households’ consumption for a period of two years.

The pilot cash transfer program targeted a total of 6,200 poor households across the two regions. These included 1,550 households in Bahr-el-Gazel, and 4,650 households in Logone Occidental. Recipient households received a transfer of 45,000 Central African Franc (CFA) every three months (or approximately $76.02) for a period of two years. This amount represents about 23% of the international poverty line, and contrasts with many of the cash transfer programs in the region that provide relatively lower transfer amounts in a higher frequency (Beegle et al., 2018). Payments were typically made to the wife of the household head. The first payments started in December 2017.

The cash transfer program used geographical targeting to select the poorest 14 rural cantons in Bahr-el-Gazel and Logone Occidental and to allocate program participant quotas within each canton that were proportional to the canton’s poverty levels. The number of villages to be served by the program in each canton was determined so that on average an estimated 40 percent of households would be covered by the cash transfer program. Accordingly, 116 villages were determined to benefit from the program. Given the lack of data within cantons, the 116 villages were selected at random.

In all program villages, a door-to-door census was conducted among all households. The questionnaire relied on the national...
harmonized survey instrument that is used by all social protection actors in Chad. It contained information to compute poverty and food insecurity estimates for each household. Among the program villages a PMT formula based on the census data was applied to rank households within each canton according to their poverty levels. Relying on the canton quota, the lowest ranked households were selected as transfer recipients.

The targeting mechanisms were explained through different channels, which included community wide assemblies, radio, and flyers. Community wide assemblies were considered the most important channel since other channels required having access to radio or being literate (for the case of flyers) which was often not the case. There were two main community wide assemblies that explained the targeting mechanism: (i) an assembly at the very start of the program when project staff visited selected villages for the first time to explain the overall program; (ii) an assembly conducted after the identification of program beneficiaries which aimed to publicly announce the list of beneficiaries.

Some villages also benefitted from accompanying measures to improve the hygiene practices of mothers and nutrition of children, and to improve the productivity and resilience of households. The aim of these accompanying measures was to increase the probability of the households breaking intergenerational cycles of poverty, reducing the incidence of malnutrition, and improving human development outcomes. However, these measures did not constitute a focus of this study, and none of the villages selected were targets for accompanying measures at the time of data collection.

4. Methods

Our findings are based on a total of 88 interviews, and 14 focus groups involving a further 78 beneficiary participants across seven villages in Logone Occidental. Interviewees comprised key stakeholders (village chiefs, women’s representatives, and program coordinators) in each village, as well as transfer recipients and non-recipients. Our qualitative sampling strategy follows the logic of a regression discontinuity design, selecting beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries just above and below the transfer eligibility cut-off. Focus groups were comprised of transfer recipients purposively selected from different points on the poverty scale (based on registry data). The training of the research team, the project preparation, and the interviews and focus groups took place in October, November, and December 2019.

In selecting the seven villages for the study, we sought to exploit regional variation, while eliminating outlier villages that may have had idiosyncratic experiences with the program. This is because we wished to identify trends that would generalize across program sites, rather than picking up anomalies that were particular to just one or two villages. We eliminated villages with extremely high or low levels of program saturation, and villages that were entirely inaccessible by road, due to flooding or impassable roads. We then strove for a mixture of larger and smaller villages.

We conducted interviews with the assistance of four researchers from the Logone Occidentale region with fluency in the local Ngambaye language. These four researchers worked as independent consultants and had no previous relationship or involvement with the project. They included 3 women and 1 man, with prior qualitative interview experience. They were trained in N’Djamena by one of the authors and lead investigators. We first conducted Key Stakeholder Interviews (KSIs) in each of the seven villages. Key stakeholders were individuals that had been closely involved in the transfer in some capacity, usually by sitting on the village-level Comité de Validation that oversaw the program’s implementation in each site. These committees were comprised of the village chief or a customary representative, a representative for the women of the village, a religious leader, a representative for the youth, and sometimes other coordinating figures. We interviewed some combination of these stakeholders in each of the seven villages.

On average, we conducted interviews with four “Key Stakeholders” in each of the seven villages. The goal of these interviews was to collate general impressions of the program and how it had been implemented and received in our target villages in order to compare experiences across sites. We also sought to collect descriptive data with regard to the disbursement of payments; village level dynamics; positive and negative spillover effects for other community members; challenges faced by beneficiaries; and, finally, to get a sense of inter-household variation in the effects and reception of the program.

In addition to these interviews, we also conducted two focus groups in each of the seven sites. Focus groups comprised approximately five women participants in each group who were purposively selected on the basis of their census-data poverty scores. In each village, we identified the 15 highest scoring transfer recipients (in other words, those who only narrowly made the cut-off point to qualify for the transfer) and the 15 lowest scoring non-recipients. This logic mimics a regression discontinuity design, in that we sought to compare experiences of the most similarly situated inhabitants of the village, with the key difference between them being receipt of the transfer. To supplement this strategy, we additionally identified the 15 lowest scoring women in the village (in other words, those living in the most extreme poverty prior to the commencement of the transfer). For both groups of transfer recipients, each member was randomly assigned either to a focus group, or to an in-depth interview. For the group of non-transfer recipients, seven were randomly selected for in-depth interviews. We decided not to conduct focus groups with non-recipients, as we did not wish to exacerbate any tensions by exposing non-recipients to potentially negative perspectives expressed by their fellow non-recipients. In other words, because we anticipated that some (but not all) non-transfer recipients might harbor resentment towards the program, we did not want to air these views more broadly in a group setting and risk fomenting further discontent.

We also conducted research in five villages in Bar El Ghazel, but, although we draw some parallels and examples from Bar El Ghazel in this paper, we do not discuss the Bar El Ghazel region in depth, since a shortage of women researchers proficient in interviewing in the language Gorone meant that our research there was more limited.

The last transfer was disbursed in September 2019, and interviews began in October 2019.

For example, in villages with high numbers of displaced populations, we might identify problems or challenges that were not necessarily relevant in villages without or with very few displaced individuals. Such a finding, while important, would have less clear policy implications for the program as a whole.
Focus groups involving transfer recipients were usually held in a quiet and private location under a tree, in someone’s house, or in a communal village space. Interviews were typically conducted outside in a quiet and private location. Each focus group was led by two women researchers, trained by the authors.

The goals of the focus groups resembled those of the KSIs, although because they comprised program participants themselves, we were able to probe relevant themes and topics more deeply. We began each focus group with questions about how beneficiaries used their cash transfers; how (if at all) the program had affected household spending patterns, as well as revenue-generating and investment; and we discussed what challenges remained for them. Because the focus groups drew from women with different experiences of poverty, we were able to scrutinize the challenges faced by differently situated women.

We subsequently conducted in-depth interviews with the remaining transfer recipients from both groups, as well as the seven non-transfer recipients. Due to the length and depth of these interviews, we only conducted in-depth interviews in three of the seven sites. These three villages were selected to maximize variation across Logone Occidentale, and to include a high saturation village, a large village, and a small village.

In each village, we interviewed 13 transfer recipients (divided between the two groups) and seven non-recipients. As discussed above, non-recipients all fell close to the program cut off (i.e. the very poorest non-beneficiaries in the village, who looked closest in their activities and livelihoods to the least poor transfer recipients). We leveraged these interviews to compare the impact and reception of the program from the perspectives of similarly situated village inhabitants. In this way, we hoped to interrogate the ways in which different members of the community made sense of program inclusion, as well as how the cut off was interpreted.

We also sought to explore the effects of the transfer on similarly situated households.

For the in-depth interviews, two researchers stayed for a week in each of the three sites, conducting approximately two interviews each per day. The in-depth interviews aimed to identify income and spending patterns, as well as differences between transfer recipients and non-recipients. They also sought to explore what transfer recipients used their funds for, what a household’s aspirations had been earlier in the process, and what emergency support structures households typically relied upon. Additionally, we endeavored to explore the challenges, social dynamics, productive capacities, daily routines, and livelihoods of research participants, as well as to document individual, household and societal changes since the transfer.

All interviews and focus groups were recorded, and researchers solicited oral consent prior to each activity. To minimize the risk of manipulation of responses provided by households, the research team made sure to introduce themselves as independent from the transfer program, and with no influence over any program decision-making. The research team was fairly confident that noth...

5. Empirical findings: Instances of “Mévente”

We find evidence of several positive spillover effects that benefited communities in the seven case study villages and increased the economic wellbeing of non-participant households. These spillover effects included the sharing of resources, increased employment opportunities for non-participants in agricultural labor and an increased market for goods sold by non-program participants, leading to increases in the material wellbeing of a number of non-program participants. Both recipient and non-recipient households noted that, in general, since the program’s inception, people were eating better and sending children to school more regularly.

However, in addition to fairly significant economic benefits expressed by non-transfer recipients, our focus group and interview data also revealed considerable social tensions that emerged as a result of selective inclusion. Not only did these social tensions rupture social cohesion and create new fissures in program villages as found in other contexts (Adato, 2000; Cárdenas et al., 2008; Mettler & Stonecash, 2008; Oduro, 2015), but punitive treatment of program recipients also served to undermine the productive potential of the program. These patterns emerged inductively from our qualitative coding of the interview and focus group transcripts.

In the sections that follow, we first document the positive repercussions and productive economic benefits that program participants and non-participants described in our interviews and focus groups. We then move on to discuss the social costs that emerged. Finally, we demonstrate how these social costs ultimately limit or threatened the economic as well as the social basis of the program, thereby undermining the transfer’s positive and productive reception.

5.1. Positive spillover effects

One of the primary positive effects of the program observed in our data took the form of participants sharing their resources in ways that benefited individual non-participants and communities more broadly. Participants shared their resources in three primary ways: they made gifts directly to individual non-transfer recipients, they pooled resources as an individual investment strategy (i.e. “tontines”) and they pooled resources with the purpose of infrastructure investment for the benefit of the whole community.

The most common form of resource sharing involved program participants giving away small portions of their transfers every time they received the 45,000 CFA payment. Generally, these gifts...
would be in the range of 200 CFA to 2,000 CFA, although it was usually closer to the lower end, at around 500 CFA.

It was most common for transfer recipients to give these small sums to parents or other close relatives or friends and neighbors. They were usually intended to pay for small items for consumption like soap and tea. When asked why they would share, a common response was that it seemed very obvious that they would share with their “proches” (those close to them) if their relatives had not received a transfer. Their reasoning often did not go beyond the mere fact that they were closely related (e.g. “because they are my parents”). For example, when asked to explain whether her parents, no?

Yes, I shared with my parents, friends and neighbors, because they’re my parents and they’re always with me. The project (transfer program) will leave sooner or later, and they’re here with me, so it’s normal that I give them a portion.”

Some did state that they had a duty to help their parents, and others said they did so to seek their parents’ “benediction.”

Participants also seemed to view the transfer as an avenue to bolster their social safety net by giving away small sums to those closest to them in order to nurture those relationships with the hope that if the tables were turned one day, they would be able to lean on those same friends and family. For example, Rolande said she typically would give her mother sums of 2,000 to 3,000 CFA every time she received a transfer distribution, “because she’s my parents and they’re always with me. The project (transfer program) will leave sooner or later, and they’re here with me, so it’s normal that I give them a portion.”

The second form of resource sharing was less common. However, a number of interviewees nevertheless mentioned that their transfer allowed them to participate in “tontines”, where a small group of about five to eight women pool their money, and each takes turns using the total sum to make a big purchase like a “boeuf” (i.e. a cow or bull). For example, Rolande describes her experience with “tontines”: “As soon as we receive the money, we buy a calf for one of us, and so on in the same manner until each one of us in the tontine group has a calf.”

The third and least common form of resource sharing that several interviewees mentioned entailed pooling resources for communal benefit, such as improving or building new infrastructure in villages. For instance, a number of interviewees described how transfer recipients contributed to the construction of a classroom in Kaba and building a well in Maimou. Annette, for example, said she contributed 5,000 CFA four times from each distribution for the construction of classrooms in Kaba. When asked whether these classrooms would be only open to children of contributors, she responded that it was intended for all children in Kaba (“all children, without exception, are accepted”).

We also identified evidence of a number of positive spillover effects for non-transfer recipients in the form of augmenting economic activity in the village. This typically manifested in various forms. Importantly, the influx of money into the village resulted in the creation of new business opportunities, increased economic consumption (and therefore a larger market for goods sold in the village, leading to profits for non-transfer recipients selling existing goods or produce). We also observed considerable evidence of employment generation resulting from the transfer. Rose, for instance, noted:

“...I told you before that we cultivated the same hectare, but now with the transfer, we rented two other hectares to cultivate. We also rented (hired) people to cultivate (the land). Before we did this ourselves, because we didn’t have any money.”

Many transfer recipients echoed Rose's comments, including Samira who highlighted: “Before we worked ourselves, and it tired my husband and me so much. Now we hire groups of people who come to work for us, and we pay them...we give them 7,000 or 8,000 CFA.” From the non-recipient perspective, many confirmed that there were many more opportunities to work as hired farm labor

10 “Milla,” Transfer Recipient Interview. Logone Occidentale. Chad. October 2019.
11 Similar dynamics could be seen in our research in Bahr-el-Gazel. For example, Djere said: I ask close parents (relatives) of course, (Who else would I ask?) There are certain individuals that are better than other, so those who have something, that’s who I ask for loans. When prodded to explain why it was always close “parents” she asked to borrow from, she said: These people will be more affected by my suffering that I feel. They’re not different from me. That’s the importance of being with your parents, no?
12 “Rolande” Transfer Recipient Interview. Logone Occidentale. Chad. November 2019.
13 “Rolande” Transfer Recipient Interview. Logone Occidentale. Chad. November 2019.
14 “Martine” Transfer Recipient Interview. Logone Occidentale. Chad. October 2019.
15 “Annette” Transfer Recipient Interview. Logone Occidentale. Chad. November 2019.
16 “Memadji” Transfer Recipient Interview. Logone Occidentale. Chad. November 2019.
17 “Rose” Transfer Recipient Interview. Logone Occidentale. Chad. October 2019.
18 “Samira” Transfer Recipient Interview. Logone Occidentale. Chad. November 2019.

Table 1
Activities in each village.

| Village Name | Province | Beneficiary Households | Saturation | Village Population | Research Activities |
|--------------|----------|------------------------|------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| KABA         | LOG      | 97                     | 35.4%      | 274                | KSIs; FGDs; In-Depth |
| NGONDONG     | LOG      | 111                    | 29.7%      | 374                | KSIs; FGDs; In-Depth |
| BIDANGAL     | LOG      | 44                     | 32%        | 139                | KSIs; FGDs         |
| BEMBAINDI    | LOG      | 72                     | 24.5%      | 294                | KSIs; FGDs         |
| MEGOUAYE     | LOG      | 58                     | 20.8%      | 278                | KSIs; FGDs         |
| BEDJOMON     | LOG      | 156                    | 34.6%      | 451                | KSIs; FGDs         |
| MAIMOU       | LOG      | 46                     | 19.9%      | 231                | KSIs; FGDs; In-Depth |

Table 2
Data collection activities.

| Activity                         | Description                   | Data | Region | Villages |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|------|--------|----------|
| Key Stakeholder Interviews      | 4 per village                 | 28   | Logone | 7        |
| Focus Groups                     | 2 per village                 | 14   | Logone | 7        |
| In-depth Interviews (beneficiaries) | 10 beneficiaries per village | 60   | Logone | 3        |
due to the transfer program. For example, Berthe remarked: “Yes, my husband goes to work in the beneficiaries’ fields to earn some money, because the circulation of money has allowed many hired hands to be employed.” Milka, a non-transfer recipient, similarly commented: “Yes, opportunities arose. People who didn’t have money before to rent land to work were able to rent it over the past two years.”

In addition to the opportunities for investment that recipients enjoyed as a result of the transfer program, non-recipients often mentioned that they also benefited from the program through the creation of new business opportunities, as they were able to ask for loans from beneficiaries to invest in their own activities. For example, Ruth described: “This transfer has helped everyone in the village… When you are a non-beneficiary and you’re doing your business, people buy your merchandise really quickly. You can also ask beneficiaries for a loan for your business and reimburse them after.”

Given an overall boost in consumption in transfer villages, non-transfer recipients frequently noted that they were able to sell their wares much more quickly than before the distributions occurred, which resulted in greater profits in a shorter time span, and in turn allowed for greater productivity overall. To illustrate, one interview with a non-transfer recipient, Anita, revealed: “Our businesses are working well… that is, when you’re selling something, people buy it quickly from you.” Rose, a transfer recipient, similarly noted: “My husband used to sell a half box of soap, but now with the money from the program, he takes a whole box (of soap), and it’s gone within two weeks.” Ruth commented:

This transfer helped everyone in the village, because when you’re a non-beneficiary and you do commerce, your merchandise is sold quickly, and you can also ask beneficiaries for a loan for your own business and then repay it later.

Although rising prices were often cited as a challenge by recipients and non-recipients alike, higher prices also were viewed as beneficial by many non-transfer recipients, as they helped market vendors to charge and earn more in their own sales.

Finally, the transfer also appears to have generated employment and created new opportunities for workers. In Logone, many transfer recipients bought parcels of land, which required more labor in order to work on it. Therefore, many transfer recipients who had never hired labor before, hired workers as a direct result of the transfer. For instance, Angela mentioned: “Before the transfer, we did not have any money to hire people to work for us, but thanks to the beneficiary money we hired my sisters-in-law so they work for us, and we pay them 5,000 CFA with the beneficiary money.” Others were able to rent land from other landowners. For example, Gifa said: “Before we only had two hectares, and we worked them ourselves. But thanks to the transfer program, we rented two more hectares for 10,000 CFA (each hectare cost 5,000 CFA). We also hired my husband’s brothers who worked for us for 5,000 CFA.” While hired laborers were not always non-recipients, often they were, and non-transfer recipients similarly commented on benefitting from these additional employment opportunities. This was particularly true in Maimou and Kaba, where more people seemed to hire labor. Wages were set at between 500 CFA and 1,000 CFA per day. It was also common to pay laborers in produce, typically harvest fruits or bags of grain.

Evidently, positive spillover effects appear to commonly feature during the implementation phases of the program, providing additional benefits to communities beyond the program’s intended objectives. However, as we dug deeper into these patterns, evidence highlighting new markets for the sale of goods by non-transfer recipients were not always as beneficial as they first seemed. Importantly, it emerged that a number of fairly troubling social dynamics accompanied these interactions, which in turn engendered a set of economic repercussions. It is to these dynamics that we now turn.

5.2. Social costs

As we probed deeper in our interviews and focus groups, it became evident that significant social costs were incurred by transfer recipients as a result of their selective inclusion in the program. These social costs can generally be recognized as jealousy and other intercommunal tensions driven by the exclusion of other households in the same village from the program.

Tensions between recipients and non-recipients were the norm in all of our research sites. A large number of our research participants commented that their communities were now divided in two according to those who had received a transfer and those who had not. Non-transfer recipient Berthe said: “… The community is divided in two: those who are happy and those who are unhappy… it’s created too much jealousy. Even friends have separated because of the transfer.” In one of the focus groups, Priscilla said: “We are divided in two parts: beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. They (non-beneficiaries) envy us, because we were identified by the project, and they weren’t. As soon as the transfer arrived, even friendships ended just because of jealousy.” Other non-recipients described the division and tensions similarly and directly attributed these dynamics to feelings of anger over their exclusion. For example, Carine said that her community had experienced difficulties because of the transfer “because the transfer divided us. The non-beneficiaries are angry that they chose only some people to give money to.” Grace expressed similar sentiments. What’s more, evidence of these themes emerged in more general discussions of the challenges non-beneficiaries face in their lives. For example, when asked to describe the principal challenges and worries she faced, Rolel said: “I am angry that I am not part of the beneficiaries, there is mévente, inflation of prices, not enough money in the village, and discord between friends who are beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries.”

Some non-recipients were forthcoming about their resentment even when they fully acknowledged the positive effects the transfer had afforded their village and them more indirectly. For instance, Sara said: “This transfer helped everyone. My business was working, and with this I could pay for my son’s enrolment at school. They built the classrooms where my children now go to school. They rent our parcels, and that benefits us too.” And yet, she goes on to openly acknowledge tensions, claiming that “beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries do not understand each other”, explaining that tensions between the two groups existed “because the beneficiaries eat well while we’re dying of hunger, and that frustrates us”. She even acknowledges that she too was jealous and embittered and that the transfer had created tensions in the community, because “we, the non-beneficiaries complain too

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19. “Berthe” Transfer Non-Recipient Interview. Logone Occidentale. Chad, November 2019.
20. “Milka” Transfer Non-Recipient Interview. Logone Occidentale. Chad, November 2019.
21. “Ruth” Transfer Non-Recipient Interview. Logone Occidentale. Chad, November 2019.
22. “Angela” Transfer Non-Recipient Interview. Logone Occidentale. Chad, November 2019.
23. “Gifa” Transfer Recipient Interview. Logone Occidentale. Chad, October 2019.
24. “Gilfa” Transfer Recipient Interview. Logone Occidentale. Chad, October 2019.
25. “Berthe” Transfer Recipient Interview. Logone Occidentale. Chad, October 2019.
26. “Priscilla,” Discussion Group 1, Megoumaye. Logone Occidentale. Chad, October 2019.
27. “Carine” Non-Recipient Interview. Logone Occidentale. Chad, November 2019.
28. “Grace” Non-Recipient Interview. Logone Occidentale. Chad, November 2019.
29. “Rolel” Non-Recipient Interviews. Logone Occidentale. Chad, November 2019.
much that they received the transfer for free but they refuse to share with us.”

While we find some evidence of dissatisfaction with the process and the results of selection, our research largely suggests that tensions arose from the fact that some villagers were excluded, rather than because of the mechanism through which they were excluded. Because program villages housed largely homogeneous populations, with over 97 percent of the households in program villages living below the poverty line, non-transfer recipients are likely to be largely similar to transfer recipients, giving them cause to wonder why they were not selected into the program. As discussed by Silva-Leander and Mortens (2016), since non-recipients also experienced considerable poverty, inclusion often seemed both arbitrary and opaque to inhabitants of our research sites. In addition, we identified a lack of understanding about why some inhabitants received the transfer and others didn’t, in some interviews, pointing to uncertainty about the process and perceived legitimacy of the PMT. Nathalie, a transfer recipient, observed of non-recipients: “They weren’t happy. They said, ‘How could they survey the whole village, and it’s only a few names that came out?’ It’s corrupt.” And Martine added: “The non-beneficiaries are unhappy. They ask why the program didn’t take them. They say that the program should take everyone. They also have the expectation that we’ll give them part of the transfer.”

Nevertheless, we infer from our data that because everyone in the community was poor, the bifurcation of the community that resulted from selective inclusion created significant tensions in all of the program villages we analyzed and would have done so no matter how participants in the program were selected. The consequences were fairly grave, manifesting as anti-social behavior toward recipients. In Focus Group 1 in Bedjomon, Ronel said: “Sometimes, even if you talk to them, they won’t respond out of jealousy.” Pelagie added: “They don’t respond to our greetings; if you’re about to cross paths, they change directions or go a different way to avoid crossing paths with you.”

Other anti-social behavior included non-recipients insulting transfer recipients or making their lives more difficult in sundry ways including refusing to lend their transfer recipient friends and neighbors small household items like salt or the use of a peanut grinder or mill. For example, in one of the discussion groups, Clarice said: “When I go over to my neighbors to ask to use their peanut grinder, they tell me that I’m a beneficiary, so why am I coming to ask for their machine?” Iyonne described a similar interaction when asking neighbors for salt: “When I go to my neighbors to ask for some salt, they ask me what I’m doing with my beneficiary money if I’m coming to ask for salt, whereas when there wasn’t any beneficiary money, they never said that to me. We used to get along very well.” Several also mentioned that recipients often gave small sums of their transfer to non-recipients in order to try to keep the peace but that this often did not quell the anti-social behavior. Memadj, for example, said: “Especially with community members—the non-beneficiaries—no matter if you give them a part or not, they always say bad things about you.”

While many non-recipients readily admitted that tensions and jealousy were common, very few offered explicit examples of anti-social behavior. It is notable that most of these stories of social costs came from transfer recipients, discussing the ways in which they felt penalized by non-recipients by virtue of their inclusion in the program. With some exceptions, non-recipients tended to be less explicit about anti-social behavior and expressions of anger towards their peers. This said, when asked whether she had experienced difficulties with anyone in the community, including her neighbors, Rolé said: “I forbid them to come visit or borrow things from me...because they receive the transfer, and they eat really well when I’m just next door.” She also openly admits to jealousy and attributes this to feeling deserving of the transfer too: “I am jealous and unhappy, because I too deserve to receive that money. I suffer a lot with my children, and there is no one to help us when that money is intended for the poorest and most vulnerable.” Although less explicitly, Nadège also acknowledges tensions within the community more broadly and anger towards her neighbors specifically. She said: “When I’m suffering and they’re doing well, it really angers me, because they eat, they find soap with their transfer, while I and my family are dying of hunger just next door.”

Finally, and significantly, sometimes these tensions seemed to escalate to overt hostility, taking the form of vitriolic threats or ill-wishes towards transfer recipients. Samira, for instance, noted: “some non-beneficiaries were against the money,” adding later: “they also say that we’re going to die because of this money.” Diane echoed these sentiments, informing us that: “the non-beneficiaries even with us dead.” Sometime this hostility even became physical as Elyse described: “When the money isn’t here, we’re fine. But as soon as it arrives, we receive insults all over the place. Even in the road if you don’t pay attention, they will make you fall to the ground just out of spite.”

Gilfa reinforced this idea, noting: “They were so frustrated that they insult us, saying that we’re all (the beneficiaries) going to die...that we were selected due to affinity (favoritism).” Although mention of this form of tension did not occur as often as other forms of hostility, it is concerning that this rhetoric was occurring at all.

5.3. Punitive costs

In this section, we turn to the ways in which these social costs and consequences of the transfer manifested as economic costs. A challenge that came up frequently in our interviews and focus groups involved situations where non-transfer recipients took advantage of transfer recipients because of the money they had received. Respondents termed this behavior “mévente.” While negative social externalities provoked by targeting has been well documented by scholars in other contexts, to our knowledge punitive behavior that threatens to undermine the productive potential of the transfer has been the subject of less attention. Not only does this constitute an important phenomenon that thus far remains underappreciated, but our data suggests an economic as well as a social case for universal inclusion. We first describe the phenomenon of méventé as it appeared in our data. Subsequently we elaborate on the manner(s) in which these actions curtail productivity.

It is worth specifying that when respondents mentioned this punitive cost, they included it as part of a broader concept they
referred to as mévente, which encompasses a range of situations where both vendors and clients face market challenges, in this case usually but not exclusively relating to the transfer. Only some of these qualify as deliberately punitive. For instance, one example of non-punitive mévente that several respondents described included scenarios where a vendor miscalculated how much product to sell. Because her product was perishable and could only be sold on the day it was made, when she found a large surplus of her product at the end of a day, this waste was nevertheless considered “mévente”. On other occasions, individuals would promise to buy something perishable from someone but the buyer never showed up to buy it so the vendor had wasted that perishable item. In these cases, although it is possible that villagers avoided purchases from these vendors – or falsely promised to buy from them – the concept of “mévente” was used widely enough to refer to a range of challenges vendors faced. Because some instances of “mévente” were not the result of deliberate sabotage, it brings the instances of deliberately punitive action into sharper relief.

Importantly, our respondents frequently invoked incidents of explicitly punitive actions. This form of mévente might take the form of a transfer recipient selling a product to a non-recipient on a credit system, but the buyer never paying the vendor back. The punitive aspect of this loss of income is made explicit, as respondents said they often are not paid back because they were recipients of the cash transfer and were presumed wealthy enough to be able to spare whatever the price of the good that was sold. Carmel captured the tensions between transfer recipients and non-recipients. She said: “When I received the transfer, the first difficulty that I encountered was that the people of the village who did not receive it were not very happy. It obstructed me from being able to do certain things that I want.”

Gilfa was more explicit: “What bothers me in my business is there are days when there is “mévente”, and people will buy on credit and then refuse to pay... because they don’t have money to pay, and some do it out of spite. They say that it’s with my beneficiary money that I’m able to do my business, and since it’s not with my own money, they don’t pay.”

Another manifestation of the punitive form of “mévente” was observed where transfer recipients said that a double-standard pricing scheme emerged where vendors would charge recipients a higher price than non-recipients. The justification for this was because the transfer recipients were “rich” and could afford it. For example, Memadji said: “We beneficiaries go to the market and the vendors say ‘here’s a beneficiary coming’ and they tax us by making us pay higher prices for merchandise.” Pascaline similarly told us “The neighbors are not happy... They lament [that they did not receive the money], and they augment the prices of their merchandise in response.”

Rose explained these dynamics more explicitly. She told us:

Rose: The purchases at the market have become more expensive than before. The traders say that we transfer recipients have money so everything becomes expensive. We also have problems when we go to market, because the shopkeeper does not want to give us change. They say they have no change so we have to buy more than we planned.

Interviewer: Why has shopping become so much more expensive, and why do shopkeepers refuse to give you change?

64 “Carmel” Transfer Recipient Interview. Logone Occidentale. Chad, November 2019.
63 “Gilfa” Transfer Recipient Interview. Logone Occidentale. Chad, October 2019.
62 “Memadji” Transfer Recipient Interview. Logone Occidentale. Chad, November 2019.
61 “Pascaline” Transfer Recipient Interview. Logone Occidentale. Chad, November 2019.

This phenomenon was also described at length in some of our focus groups. By way of example, Anissette explained: “What bothers me in my business is that there are days when there is a slump, and people who take things on credit then refuse to pay us back.” Gilfa added: “They take 250 CFA or 500 CFA credit, and then refuse to pay it back.” When asked why they do this, the focus group participants responded that “some do it out of spite. They say it’s with my beneficiary money that I make it. Because it’s not my own money, he won’t pay for the items.” These dynamics suggest that the intercommunal tensions identified in the previous section extend beyond intra-community relations, and have important repercussions for the transfer’s economic impact and productivity.

In sum, evidence for the incidence of punitive “mévente” indicates that targeting can not only have serious social repercussions, but can also weaken and undermine the productivity of transfer programs. Bifurcating a population with similar poverty levels can on occasion encourage non-recipients to hinder recipients’ entrepreneurial efforts, consumption, and (indirectly) their ability to save. When exploring social dynamics created by targeting and inclusion, program architects should consider the ways in which these social dynamics may engender material consequences in addition to those which are normatively problematic.

6. Conclusion

It is important to highlight that, on the whole, the program had significant positive effects on the wellbeing of transfer recipients and non-recipients. At the same time, it is evident that, in addition to considerable social costs that have been well-documented in earlier work on various social assistance programs and cash transfers specifically, the social cohesion effects that derive from targeting and selective inclusion into cash transfer programs can also engender economic consequences that threaten to undermine the productive potential of the transfers over the long term and compound grievances and inequalities.

Our evidence suggests that selecting certain households as transfer recipients to the exclusion of others, bifurcated the community and created jealousy and animosity towards those included. Yet it is important to also bear in mind the study’s limitations. First, this research took place in only one region Chad. While it is evident from our analysis that the main findings of the report are strongly applicable to all of the villages that we studied, this does not mean that similar social cleavages will necessarily happen in other regions of Chad, or in other countries. In fact, a quantitative analysis of the same cash transfer program (Schnitzer et al., 2022) highlights potential differences in the patterns we find across regions: after the program was introduced, 85 percent of households in the region we studied reported a conflict happening at least once in the past year between households of their communities. This contrasts to only 40 percent of households in the Bahr-el-Gazel region, which is also a largely poor and homogeneous area. More research is needed to understand the factors that can
lead to improvements or deteriorations on social cohesion in contexts of widespread poverty. This involves understanding the role of potential contributing factors such as the initial levels of social cohesion, cultural norms or beliefs, program coverage levels, accompanying measures to cash transfers, and communication. Finally, while our research provided insights about within-community dynamics, to our knowledge no research has looked at social cohesion effects between communities.

Nonetheless, there are a number of possible and actionable policy implications that stem from this finding. First, it is plausible that increasing the transparency of the targeting mechanism (in this case, PMT) might demystify why certain participants were selected over others (Hanna & Olken, 2018). While this may not assuage feelings of jealousy and resentment, it is evident that there was a general lack of understanding of how and why certain individuals were selected, which seemingly further ruptured social relations. For example, Martine said: “The non-beneficiaries are unhappy. They ask why the program didn’t take them. They say that normally the program should take everyone. They also have the expectation that we’ll give them part of the transfer.” Instead of complaining that the process or outcome of targeting was mismatched with expectations, we overwhelmingly observed instead that participants did not like the way targeting divided the community into two groups: a group of transfer recipients and a group of “non-recipients.” We infer from this finding that, in contexts where everyone is perceived to be deserving of assistance, then this leads to decidedly different policy implications.

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For instance, Bossuyt et al (2021) find that productive accompanying measures in Niger significantly improved the social cohesion of communities.

50 “Martine” Transfer Recipient Interview. Logone Occidentale. Chad, October 2019.

51 e.g., “Carine”, “Grace”, “Ruth”, “Sara”, “Josephine”, “Sidonie”, Non-Recipients Interview. Logone Occidentale. Chad, November 2019.

as more deserving of assistance than others (Berry & Lake, 2021). This too can create social cleavages and intra-communal animosities. Taken together, more research is needed to understand whether and in which circumstances categorical targeting may result in better social cohesion outcomes than poverty targeting. If, as our data suggests, dissatisfaction derives not from imperfect information or a lack of transparency about how recipients were selected, nor from a flawed methodology for determining inclusion, but instead from the sheer fact that everyone was perceived to be deserving of assistance, then this leads to decidedly different policy implications.

Additionally, the selection process worked, as many of non-recipients mentioned that the progam only selected one part of the population in their village. There is poor, such reactions may not be surprising. Every non-geting is framed as an approach to select the poor when everyone was a general lack of understanding of how and why certain indi-

49 While public lotteries could be potentially considered as both transparency, they have hoped to be selected in the days following beneficiary selection process worked, as many of non-recipients mentioned that they had hoped to be selected in the days following beneficiary selection. In addition to transparency, the perception of fairness may be equally important for social outcomes. It is possible that no poverty targeting methods may be deemed fair in this case, as limited budgets imply that some poor households are excluded. While public lotteries could be potentially considered as both transparent and fair, giving equally deserving poor people an opportunity to benefit from a program, more research would be needed to confirm this is the case.

Alternating the targeting mechanism may not necessarily, however, ameliorate the challenges we identify. Premand and Schnitzer (2021), for instance, have found that while CBT may be slightly better aligned with community’s understanding of poverty, overall communities prefer PMT because CBT suffer from information asymmetries and can be manipulated by selection committees (see also: Conning & Kevane, 2002). Furthermore, in contexts of widespread poverty, putting community members in the difficult position of deciding who should benefit from a program can similarly lead to resentment and animosity. Similarly, others have suggested that categorical targeting may alleviate some of these concerns. Categorical targeting can provide support to particular underprivileged social groups deemed “deserving of support” by either governments or development partners. Groups might include or be limited to the elderly, mothers, children, and differently abled persons (Bossuyt & Coudouel, 2018). Indeed, many countries’ constitutions, including, for example, those of Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zambia, name specific vulnerable groups that should be provided public support (Bossuyt & Coudouel, 2018). Some scholars and practitioners have claimed that categorical targeting might alleviate perceptions of unfairness that emerge from mismatched or poorly understood poverty targeting. However, other research suggests that “hierarchies of suffering” or victimhood can emerge when external actors recognize some forms of marginalization and harm

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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