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# Operational

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### Targeting

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*Guidance Package on Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus*

DEVCO  
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# Introduction

This operational note provides:

- An overview of the beneficiary-selection process including target group identification, fiscal choice, design and implementation.
- A description of selection or 'targeting' mechanisms used to identify potential beneficiaries of social benefits and humanitarian assistance.
- An understanding of mix designs and specific policy instruments applying to direct social transfers to a target group.
- A definition of targeting costs, exclusion and inclusion errors and a number of challenges to improve the accuracy of beneficiary selection under the humanitarian-development nexus.
- A range of examples to illustrate the efficiency of selection methods in different contexts.
- An awareness of how to adjust the targeting process in fragile environments.
- A summary of the challenges of implementing beneficiary selection in conflict areas and areas exposed to climate shocks and other crises.

It is useful to formulate four stylised facts that are always crucial when elaborating a design of social assistance programmes in fragile contexts:

**Stylised fact 1:** Those who are most vulnerable and extreme poor are also those who suffer most from shocks and crises.

**Stylised fact 2:** In times of shocks and crises, it is generally challenging to obtain reliable and constantly updated data on new poverty status, migration flows and level of fragility.

**Stylised fact 3:** The vulnerable often require immediate support and ready-to-go solutions for assistance in fragile contexts.

**Stylised fact 4:** Social protection objectives may be different and change over time in fragile contexts in comparison to those in stable environments.

**Social protection and humanitarian assistance comprise a wide range of interventions aimed at the effective provision of resources and services to people who live in or are threatened by poverty.** These interventions, among others, cushion the impact of various shocks and crises at the individual, regional or country level. Social benefits are transferred in cash or in kind and can be either contributory or non-contributory, depending on whether they are financed through social insurance contributions or directly by governments. In developing countries, which are characterised by low tax-to-GDP ratios, high levels of tax evasion and weak state capacity, non-contributory social assistance schemes have proliferated as the main policy instrument to alleviate poverty and protect the vulnerable.

**Recent climate shocks, economic crises, political instability and radicalisation raise several challenges in the context of the rapidly evolving social protection agenda.** The design of social assistance programmes in less developed and fragile countries has gained increased attention under the humanitarian-development nexus. Could policy instruments which are universally effective in stable countries prove to work in fragile environments? How do short-term humanitarian emergency responses contribute to long-term sustainable development? Do they overlap with social protection initiatives? How can we design flexible selection processes that can be adapted in times of crisis or conflict? These and other questions need to be addressed to achieve the minimum standards of progressive humanitarian aid contributing to socio-economic development in fragile contexts.

**One important element of the design – often known as ‘targeting’ – is the method for identifying who receives social benefits.** In cases of crises and conflicts, social benefits would also imply immediate humanitarian assistance and other support. The beneficiary-selection process comprises both the establishment of eligibility criteria and picking out those who meet these criteria. This operational note focuses on targeted humanitarian interventions with a whole variety of beneficiary-selection mechanisms, giving brief overviews of cases when they can provide efficient policy solutions depending on the shock typology. The stylised facts formulated above help to highlight the main challenges and draw out general implications for the elaboration of the beneficiary-selection design in fragile areas.

**Weak targeting in social assistance remains a serious issue in both fragile and stable environments, but in fragile areas the consequences can be more tangible and irreversible.** At the same time, it is admitted that there is no significant evidence that beneficiary selection is qualitatively different in fragile and stable contexts (Carpenter et al., 2012). For example, in Sierra Leone, elite capture of funds was driven rather by poverty of the committee members allocating cash transfers and not by the post-conflict environment (Osofian, 2011). Yet fragile contexts, including severe climate shocks, conflicts or pandemics as well as other crises, raise a set of challenges for beneficiary selection in social assistance programmes in developing countries.

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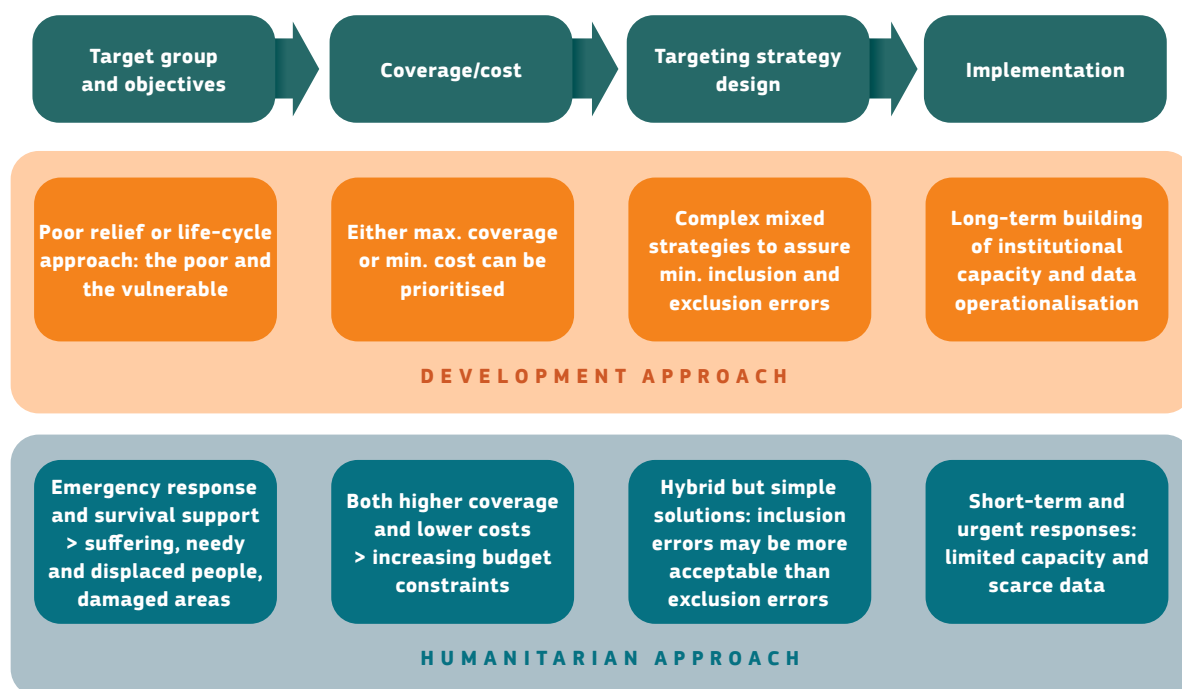
# Beneficiary-selection process across the humanitarian- development nexus

The beneficiary-selection process comprises several phases: target group identification (**who to select**), fiscal choice (**how many to select**), design (**how to select**) and implementation (**how to carry out the selection**). Figure 1 shows the distinctive features of the targeting phases in the development and humanitarian approaches.

**Phase 1** includes not only the identification of target groups but also the formulation of policy objectives. Under the development approach, social protection is aimed toward the poor and the vulnerable and provides either poverty relief or supports the minimum living standards during the life cycle. Under the humanitarian approach, the objectives can be more diverse – from short-term response to long-term recovery. At the same time, the target groups are easy to define, either on a geographical basis or based on rapid needs assessment. The beneficiaries are typically shock-affected, most suffering, and/or displaced people.

**Phase 2** consists of budgetary choices made by key actors (policy makers, NGOs and others) who can prioritise either the coverage or the cost of a social protection programme. For example, decision makers can maximise the number of poor households receiving a minimum benefit, or conversely, maximise the total amount of money going to poor households. In crisis contexts, as well as in contexts with high poverty prevalence, programmes should cover a large number of households and provide high enough financial support at same time in order to avoid high exclusion errors. This implies increased budget constraints.

Figure 1. Beneficiary-selection process across the humanitarian-development nexus

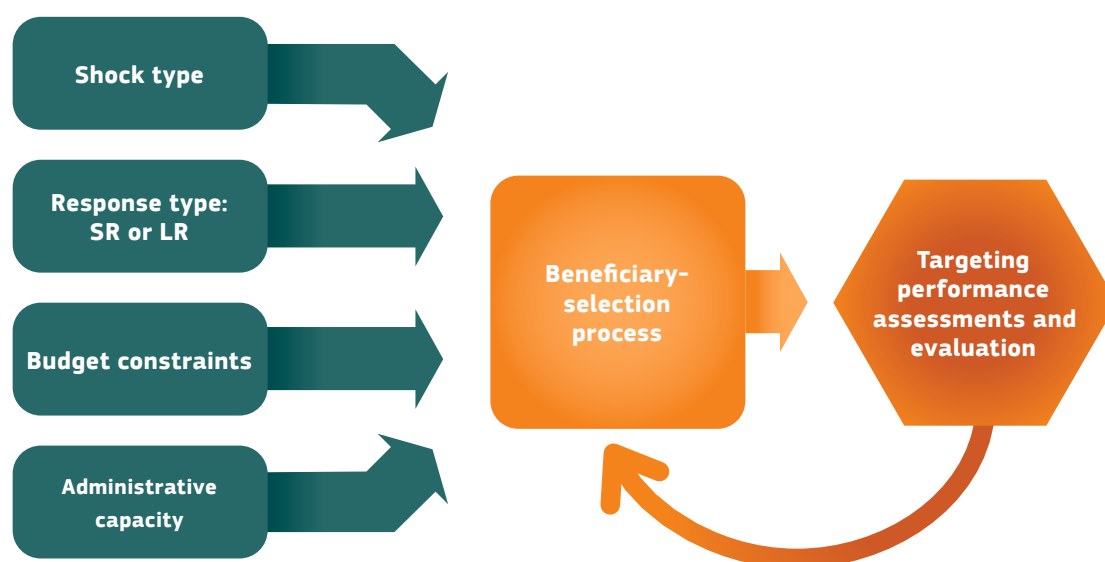


**Phase 3** aims to determine a method or a mix of methods for identifying needy areas and deserving households and individuals. A targeting method or combination of methods should be designed which is likely to select beneficiaries effectively and maximise the impact achieved. In stable situations, complex mixed strategies minimising both inclusion and exclusion errors can be elaborated. In emergencies, simple hybrid solutions can be most effective. In addition, inclusion errors may be more acceptable than exclusion errors.

**Phase 4** refers to the implementation of a chosen targeting strategy which is usually based on long-term building of institutional capacity and data operationalisation in stable environments. Under the humanitarian approach, the focus should be on preventive measures and *ex ante* capacity building and elaboration of the data base that can be used to assess the extent of damage and to reach the needy during shocks or crises. This phase also includes registering and verifying the eligibility of beneficiaries as well as establishing monitoring systems.

The decision at every phase of the beneficiary-selection process will depend on several inputs. Figure 2 displays the most important prerequisites, such as shock type (e.g. economic shock, conflict, disaster, pandemic, etc.), response type (short-term relief or long-term recovery, immediate or prolonged, etc.), budget constraints and administrative capacity. They basically define the choice of target groups, fiscal options, eligibility criteria, selection method and implementation strategies that constitute the beneficiary-selection process. The overall decision scheme also contains targeting performance assessments and evaluation for the purpose of making necessary adjustments in response to emergencies and changing environments.

Figure 2. Decision scheme for the beneficiary-selection process in fragile contexts



Targeting efficiency and performance depend on various factors including, first of all, country characteristics like administrative capacity or institutional accountability, then programme characteristics like the budget available for a programme, or a programme's objective, and finally transitory conditions like environmental or institutional changes, crises or shocks.

**Principles of beneficiary selection<sup>1</sup>** across the humanitarian-development nexus are the following:

- Targeting should be **acceptable** from both political and social/cultural perspectives.
- Targeting process should **respect dignity** of population and foresee the participation of population throughout the process.
- Beneficiary identification should be **simple and clear** for all members of a society or community. The costs should be **justified**, procedures should be as **transparent** as possible.
- Targeting strategy should be **appropriate** for the type of shock and stage of the response.
- Selection method(s) should be **feasible** in view of available administrative capacity and operationalisation potential.
- Beneficiary selection should be **affordable** in terms of financial and institutional constraints.
- Targeting response should be **timely and contextual** depending on the type of shock and short-term or long-term recovery support required.
- Targeting strategy should be **flexible** with a potential of being adjusted to changing environments during a shock or crisis.

The EC summarises global experiences of modified social protection in fragile contexts with the following policy strategies: design tweaks, piggy backing, vertical and horizontal expansions and alignment.<sup>2</sup> Table 1 highlights advantages and risks in targeting processes associated with these five strategies.

Table 1. Beneficiary selection: advantages and risks across the humanitarian-development nexus

TYPE OF SHOCK RESPONSES	CONCEPT	ADVANTAGES FOR BENEFICIARY SELECTION	DISADVANTAGES FOR BENEFICIARY SELECTION
Design tweaks	Adjusting a social protection programme in operation in response to a shock.	Beneficiary selection should be improved depending on shock type and response objective.	Potential losses in value of transfers and coverage for existing beneficiaries may arise; therefore, there is a risk of perceived unfairness and conflicts.
Piggy backing	Using elements of an existing social programme in an emergency response.	Beneficiary selection might be slightly improved or completely new.	Requirement for capacity and experience to develop or adjust beneficiary-selection method(s).
Vertical expansion	Temporarily increasing the value or duration of transfers for existing beneficiaries.	No effort in adjusting beneficiary-selection method(s).	Potential ineffectiveness of existing beneficiary-selection method(s) in fragile contexts.
Horizontal expansion	Temporarily increasing the number of beneficiaries in an existing programme.	No effort in adjusting beneficiary-selection method(s).	Potential ineffectiveness of existing beneficiary-selection method(s) in fragile contexts.
Alignment	Aligning social protection and humanitarian interventions with one another and/or aligning components of humanitarian interventions with one another.	Aligning beneficiary-selection method(s) might be challenging but may not be required.	No guarantee that the aligned beneficiary-selection method(s) will be equally effective in all social protection and humanitarian responses.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from the EC, World Bank, UNHCR and World Food Programme principles of targeting.

<sup>2</sup> European Commission (2019) *Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus: A Game Changer in supporting people through crises*; O'Brien et al. (2018) *Shock-Responsive Social Protection Systems Toolkit*.

### Scaling up social assistance in times of crises: the Ebola case

**The Ebola virus spread rapidly in West Africa in 2014.** More than 20,000 infected people and about 10,000 deaths were registered. Such an epidemic crisis severely impacted economic situations in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea leading to job losses, closed schools, and hampered trade and businesses. The governments with the help of international donors attempted to improve food security by rapidly scaling up existing safety net programmes, particularly cash transfers and public works programmes. The total aid from the World Bank amounted to USD 45 million. In addition, the World Bank has contributed to building administrative capacity (e.g. e-payments), improving logistics, disease surveillance and data collection, especially in Liberia and Sierra Leone. In Sierra Leone, about 5,000 young people have been enrolled into public works, and, additionally, more than 10,000 individuals receive social cash transfers. In Liberia, 10,000 young people have been reached by a public works programme and 10,000 extremely poor, labour-constrained individuals have been supported through a cash transfer programme. In Guinea, the Productive Safety Nets Project provides temporary jobs for more than 12,000 young people. Further, in 2015 the World Bank together with the United Nations and other development partners established an Ebola Recovery Assessment (ERA) covering Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

*(World Bank, 2015)*



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# Selection policy choices and beneficiary identification methods

**After the target group identification and fiscal choice, the targeting method(s) for beneficiary selection should be designed (Phase 3).** The process of selecting potential beneficiaries consists of identifying those individuals or households who are eligible to receive transfers and simultaneously screening out the non-eligible members of the population. Various methods exist to target social transfers to the desired groups (Coady et al. 2004; Barrientos, 2013; Devereux et al. 2017; Dodlova et al. 2018b). The first approach implies the distribution of social benefits based on explicit group characteristics like **categorical**, **seasonal** or **geographical** criteria. Transfers are directed to people belonging to a certain age, gender, status or social category, or to people for a particular period of time, or to people living in specific regions identified as the poorest within a country based on literacy rates or measures of nutritional status or consumption.

## Categorical selection: example

After the earthquake in Pakistan in 2005, the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund defined specific vulnerable groups which were used to target support:

- widows without sons over the age of 18
- women with disabled husbands
- divorced, abandoned and unmarried women who are dependent on others
- people with physical and mental disabilities
- orphans
- unaccompanied people over the age of 60
- people left landless as a result of the earthquake.

(World Bank, 2009)

The second approach is based on poverty or income assessment and includes means testing, proxy means testing and community-based selection. These selection methods imply that all individuals or households whose income falls below a certain threshold or whose poverty level is high are eligible for the programme benefits. The difference is in the technique for income assessment. Under **means testing**, the income of potential beneficiaries is self-reported or measured either through tax records or other sources of information, or if no information is available, which is a quite often the case in developing countries, by a programme official. Hence, a distinction must be drawn between verified and unverified means tests. **Verified means tests** use comprehensive data on the applicant's income or wealth, not relying solely on the information reported by an applicant but also additionally verifying the information against independent sources (e.g. pay stub, income and property tax records, wage information from employers, or financial information from banks, etc.). **Simple (unverified) means tests** are typically conducted by an official or social worker. The applicant's eligibility status is qualitatively determined during household visits. In particular, the observable living standard is used to derive information on income and wealth. In addition, simple interviews or the provision of documents stating the applicant's income or wealth-related indicators are utilised to collect the necessary information (Coady et al. 2004, 2013).

**Proxy means tests** are similar to means tests, but instead of using only one indicator of income, they use information on observable household characteristics that are strongly correlated with poverty to calculate a score for the given household's economic situation. The information typically collected for proxy means tests in poor countries includes the quality of the dwelling, the ownership of durable goods, household composition, education level, and occupational sector. The score is then used to determine eligibility for benefits.

In **community-based** programmes, the responsibility for identification is delegated to a group of community members or a community leader who decides on eligibility for a programme. This selection method takes advantage of the fact that local actors can usually obtain more and better information on the poverty composition within a community at a lower cost than programme officials. Local chiefs, leaders of social or religious groups, members of single-purpose NGOs, or locally elected officials are possible entities acting as community agents.

### Relative performance of proxy means testing and community-based selection

**Stoeffler (2016) evaluates the targeting performance of CBT and a PMT in a pilot cash transfer programme in Cameroon.** Using low per capita consumption as targeting criteria, the PMT outperforms CBT. Due to low administrative capacities, assessment, monitoring, and enforcement of the CBT allocation rules prove to be difficult. To enhance the targeting performance of CBT in such a context, clear guidelines on the definitions of poverty which need to be in line with the policy objective and local perception are highlighted to be essential. Alatas et al. (2012) confirms in a field experiment in Indonesia that PMT performs better than CBT in identifying households with low per capita consumption, but CBT can lead to higher levels of satisfaction than a PMT. Their results suggest that communities may apply other concepts of poverty and vulnerability which involve more information than solely measuring per capita consumption of a household. Interestingly, Alatas et al. (2012) did not detect any elite capture. Hence, CBT may be most effective when applying hybrid systems, which stipulate significant discretion for the community agents as well as clear and unambiguous targeting criteria, regulations that allow for external monitoring and evaluation of the community agents (Conning and Kevane, 2002). In addition, Hanna and Olken (2018) appraise the community approach as more efficient than a PMT in identifying those households who self-assessed themselves as poor. They also find experimentally a higher support from citizens of the community-based approach than of the data-driven proxy-means test.

**Participatory approaches** are widely applied in social welfare programmes as they help to use available information to rank households according their poverty or wealth status. The identification of the poorest or the vulnerable in this case can be based on household census and survey information or involvement of community members in the beneficiary selection process. Census participatory approaches use simple questionnaires and data on household assets to create a wealth index by which households can be ranked. Despite their simplicity, large-scale censuses are expensive and time-consuming. Alternative participatory approaches imply the direct involvement of community members in the household ranking procedure. For example, a group of community representatives could be responsible for making the final decision on household eligibility. Hence, many community-based approaches are participatory by design. **Participatory Wealth Ranking** (PWR) is a method of identifying the poorest households with the help of community resources. This includes meetings with community representatives to discuss the characteristics of households, which can be helpful in differentiating wealth categories (e.g. extreme poor, moderate poor, least poor, etc.). The community representatives then use these categories and characteristics to rank the households in the community and identify the poorest. Local expertise of community members allows the ranking to be made quickly and cheaply even in low-capacity contexts.

A stand-alone approach is to provide all citizens an opportunity to self-select into getting assistance. A good example of **self-selection** programmes are employment guarantee schemes based on a work requirement paid below the market level for unskilled labour or at the level of the minimum wage. This principle ensures that only the needy benefit from the programme and the non-poor are discouraged from programme participation. Another example is a free supply of an inferior good like yellow maize instead of the white maize normally consumed by all the people in a country. In addition, private participation or transaction costs might be imposed. Common examples include stigma costs associated with the programme participation or time restrictions on transfers, implying that applicants need to queue, which is used as filter; points of service delivery are situated in areas with high concentrations of poor people, resulting in higher costs for non-poor to reach the service point.

In the absence of targeting, social transfers are universally available to everyone in a society. **Universal approaches** propose that all citizens without restrictions receive identical benefits, which is emphasised as fostering social unity (Grosh et al. 2008). In countries where poverty is widespread, universal coverage may be more appropriate to attain poverty alleviation since it can reduce the administrative complexity and any potential for manipulation in eligibility identification (Standing, 2007). However, universal coverage is often claimed to be expensive and unaffordable, especially in poor countries. Further, the rich also get the same transfer as the poor, which leads to leakages of scarce resources. The rationale for implementing a targeted approach is generally illustrated by, on the one hand, ethical concepts of fairness and progressive redistribution of resources within a society and, on the other hand, the objective to maximise social welfare subject to a limited budget (Devereux et al. 2017). In the name of cost efficiency, equitable distribution and progressivity, beneficiary selection has often been preferred over universalism – not only in less developed countries (Dutrey 2007; Coady et al. 2013). However, both approaches have their advantages and disadvantages and offer a range of solutions suitable for different contexts.

Figure 3 summarises all types of selection methods that are applied in social protection programmes. Table 2 shows the main pros and cons of choosing one particular selection method. And Table 3 overviews the benefits, costs and risks of these methods in fragile environments.

Figure 3. Selection & Identification of Potential Beneficiaries in Social Protection Programmes.

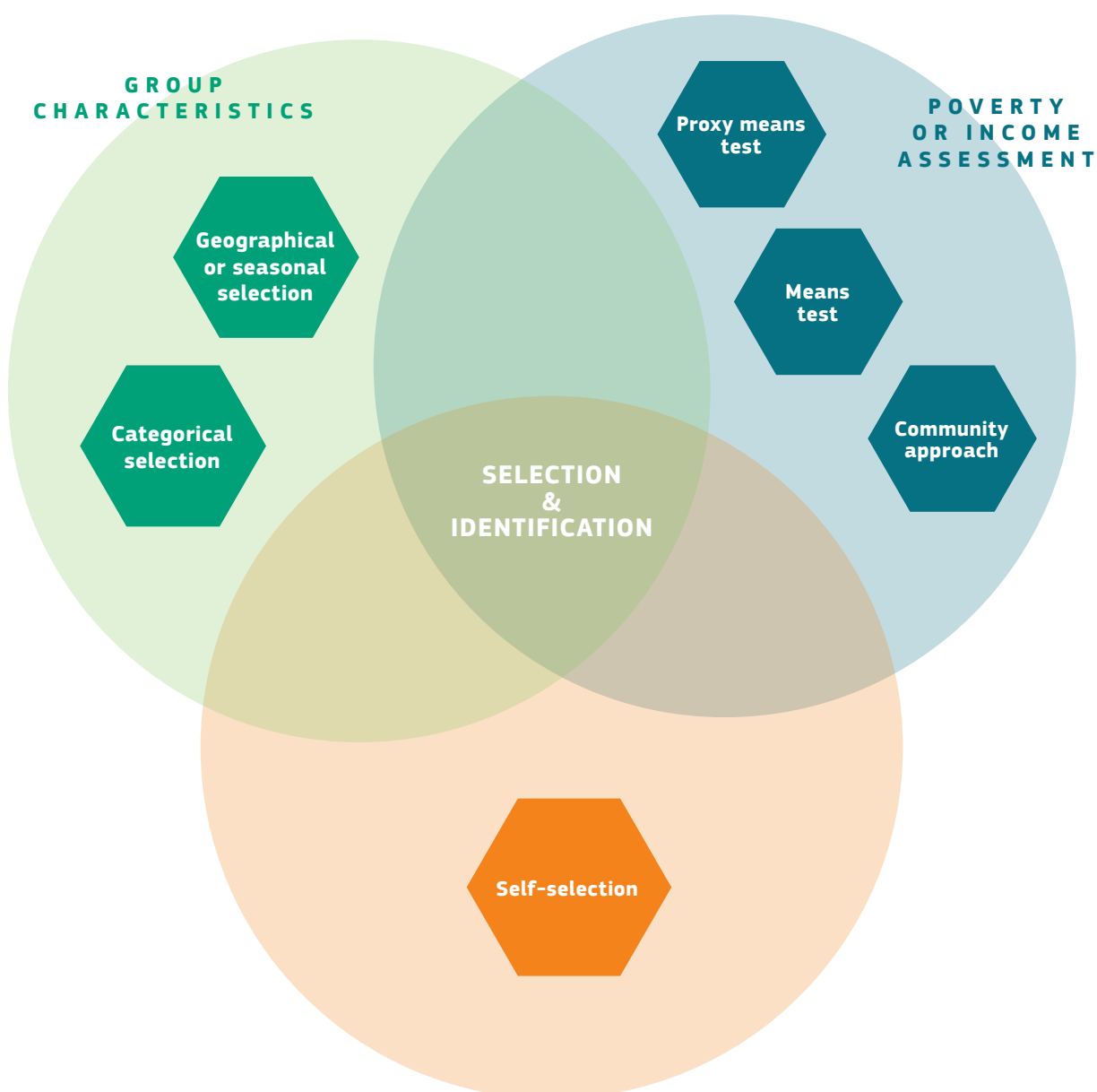


Table 2. Pros and Cons of Selection Methods.

SELECTION METHOD	PROS AND CONS OF SELECTION METHODS
Categorical	<p>The main advantage of categorical targeting is that benefits are distributed on the condition of fulfilling predefined demographic or social characteristics which are easily observed, hard to falsify, and associated with a high prevalence of poverty and vulnerability (Coady et al. 2004; Devereux et al. 2017). Apart from age and sex, the other categories might be based on disability, ethnicity or land ownership (Coady et al. 2013). If adequately designed, categorical targeting is highly transparent, and thus, it is often perceived as fair and should carry no stigma. Besides, it requires neither complex administration nor a large budget where essential statistical data are accessible. Yet targeting all children or elderly, for example, may not always coincide with reaching only the poorest or most vulnerable (Gatzweiler and Baumüller 2014). Hence, categorical targeting easily results in high rates of beneficiary-selection errors since the actual poverty status is not directly determined (Devereux et al. 2017).</p>
Geographical	<p>A special form of categorical selection based on the location of residence is referred to as geographical selection. Benefits are allocated to specific regions, districts, or communities with incidence of chronically poor residents. This means of targeting is also often applied in areas where natural disasters occur more frequently (Slater and Farrington, 2009). Blanket coverage of geographic units is considered to be appropriate where poverty is widespread or the administrative and social costs are excessively high (Sabates-Wheeler et al. 2015). Geographical targeting can be reasonable if there is a strong correlation between place and poverty (Coady et al., 2004a, 2013). Further, this method is administratively simple and low-cost. Stigma effects and labour disincentives are also unlikely to occur (Coady et al. 2013). Geographically targeted programmes, however, reveal a high rate of 'targeting errors by design', because geographical location remains a rather weak proxy for individual poverty even if poverty is to some extent spatially concentrated across a country. When the programme expands to less homogeneously poor areas, targeting efficiency decreases and leakage increases (Devereux et al. 2017). In addition, marginal populations residing in areas with a lower average prevalence of poverty are likely not to be covered by the social transfer programme (Choudhury and Räder, 2014). Nevertheless, significant gains in the targeting performance have been found when targeting at smaller administrative levels. This could be demonstrated in Ecuador, Madagascar and Cambodia, where the impact on poverty reduction was simulated using different geographical units. As a result, geographical targeting of smaller areas should be preferred over a national level targeting threshold (Elbers et al. 2007). Another important issue is that political compromise could lead to a fixed portion of coverage within each geographic unit rather than the coverage of the poorest units. This is often provoked by lobbying efforts on the part of representatives of each geographic unit to be included by the social transfer programme (World Bank 2016b).</p>
Means testing	<p>Means testing requires administratively complex implementation and the presence of documentation on economic transactions, which makes them less common in less developed countries. Unsurprisingly, verified means testing is the most laborious and data demanding selection mechanism but also considered to be most accurate (Coady et al. 2004; Devereux et al. 2017). In contexts of weak administrative capacity and/or a high share of informal labour, documenting and verifying income is not straightforward. Hence, there are large differences in the complexity and accuracy of means tests. Policy makers more often choose simple means tests where an officer assesses the income of a potential beneficiary in their home; or the applicant is interviewed in an office with the information taken at face value. In such cases, one threat is that an officer wields considerable power over eligibility decisions.</p> <p>Also, the targeting effectiveness of means-tested programmes in developing countries is generally disappointing. One of the reasons for this is that the majority of potential beneficiaries are most likely employed in the informal sector and lack any form of income documentation. Consequently, such an environment demands strategies other than relying on directly observable income or wealth as the basis for defining the poverty status of an applicant (Devereux et al. 2017).</p>

<b>Proxy means testing</b>	<p>Proxy means testing (PMT) might be relatively costly and require high administrative capacity to measure and verify income or conduct surveys. The targeting accuracy of PMT to screen out the poorest is highly dependent on the proxies selected, the weights applied to them, and on how thoroughly the identification process is implemented (Devereux et al. 2017). Statistical methods, such as regression or principal components analyses, are usually applied to derive the weighting of the indicators used. Subsequently, the weighted indicators are used across the population to predict the welfare situation of each individual or household (Coady et al. 2013). Due to the formulaic nature of the mechanism, which allows for replicable assessment based on consistent and observable criteria, horizontal equity can be expected from a well-instituted PMT. This implies that the same eligibility status should be assigned to the same or similar applicants, irrespective of which officer carries out the evaluation. Thus, concerns about malfeasance, such as rent-seeking or randomness of benefit assignment might be alleviated (Coady et al. 2013; Dodlova et al. 2018b). Niehaus et al. (2013) underline the complexity of designing an appropriate PMT, namely the trade-off between statistical accuracy and enforceability. While adding more targeting criteria increases the statistical accuracy, it may also increase the opportunity for corrupt behaviour since monitoring and enforcing of numerous criteria become more difficult. The assignment of individuals or households to a programme under a PMT is often not easily understood by the population since it is based on an opaque score (Gatzweiler and Baumüller 2014). This can lead to social conflicts within communities (Kidd et al. 2017).</p>
<b>Community-based selection/participatory tools</b>	<p>Community-based targeting (CBT) is an increasingly widespread mechanism, as applying local definitions of poverty status may be more appropriate than relying on rigid national definitions (Conning and Kevane 2002). Information asymmetries can be minimised, resulting in improved targeting effectiveness, since hiding wealth from your neighbours is more difficult than from official agents. This may circumvent the problem of assessing unobservable income (Rai 2002; Alatas et al. 2012; Devereux et al. 2017). Administrative costs as well as the total deadweight loss can be reduced by using community agents rather than official agents who need to be paid a higher salary and are less well-informed (Conning and Kevane 2002). The mobilisation of valid information functions best within clearly defined and cohesive communities without adverse domination by elites (McCord 2013). However, having comprehensive information on who are the neediest does not automatically lead to the most accurate beneficiary selection. The community agents may pursue interests of their own rather than operating purely on the basis of people's actual needs (Coady et al. 2013). The trade-off between more information and the risk of elite capture was analysed for two large-scale subsidy programmes of agricultural inputs and food implemented in Malawi. While mistargeting was occurring, the overall extent was only limited and often negligibly small. More importantly, community agents targeted households with higher returns to input of resources. In this case, the CBT is more productively efficient than could be achieved through a statistical method (Basurto et al. 2017).</p>
<b>Self-Selection</b>	<p>A self-selection mechanism is supposed to increase the opportunity costs of applying for a programme for the non-poor population. Consequently, labour disincentives are unlikely to be distorted and administrative costs are likely to remain low (Coady et al. 2013). However, imposed costs will lower the net value of benefits to some extent, which prevents the programme from transferring larger benefits. If the costs required to access the programme are too high, the poorest are unable to obtain any benefits at all. Thus, in the context of widespread poverty, the screening mechanisms may fail to adequately discourage the non-poor from applying to social programmes, implying both inclusion and exclusion errors (Devereux et al. 2017).</p>

Table 3. Selection Methods in Fragile Contexts.

SELECTION METHOD	BENEFITS	RISKS
<b>Categorical</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy implementation</li> <li>• Possible to address the groups most affected or exposed to shocks (e.g. widows, ex-combatants, refugees and IDPs)</li> <li>• Minimal eligibility manipulation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low selection accuracy</li> </ul>
<b>Geographical/ Seasonal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy implementation</li> <li>• Possible to address worst affected areas or areas affected in a certain time period</li> <li>• Useful first-level targeting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low selection accuracy</li> <li>• Potential for migration</li> </ul>
<b>Means test</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good selection accuracy</li> <li>• Potential to estimate damage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Costly and difficult implementation</li> <li>• High eligibility manipulation if non-verified</li> <li>• Possible stigma and social conflicts</li> </ul>
<b>Proxy means test</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximal selection accuracy</li> <li>• Low eligibility manipulation</li> <li>• Possibility of including exposure to shocks in proxy indicators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Costly and difficult implementation</li> <li>• Hard choice of proxy indicators</li> <li>• No transparency</li> <li>• Low public support leading to social unrest and conflicts</li> </ul>
<b>Community-based/ participatory tools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advantage of local information</li> <li>• Increase of social cohesion</li> <li>• Effective in decentralised countries</li> <li>• Potential to estimate damage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local capture and eligibility manipulation</li> <li>• Control and monitoring hard in the absence of supervising teams</li> </ul>
<b>Self-selection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective short-term intervention</li> <li>• Linked to recovery and reconstruction activities</li> <li>• Skill and income generation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Costly participation</li> <li>• Potential gender bias</li> <li>• Opportunity costs to participation</li> <li>• Stigma</li> </ul>
<b>Universal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy implementation</li> <li>• High public support</li> <li>• No costs of targeting, e.g. migration or social conflicts/unrest/stigma</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No selection accuracy</li> <li>• Costly</li> </ul>

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# Selection costs and errors

The beneficiary-selection process can be costly depending on contexts, available budget, capacities, and chosen targeting methods. Devereux et al. (2017) distinguishes between the following types of targeting costs:

- **Administrative:** budget, expertise, capacity, time, skills, etc. needed for implementation. These costs can be split between design and operational costs.
- **Private:** beneficiaries' time, effort, fees, lost income to prove their eligibility.
- **Indirect:** beneficiaries' changing behaviour to become eligible for a transfer (e.g. migration).
- **Social:** reduced community cohesion, potential conflicts, unfairness perceptions.
- **Political:** manipulations by politicians and community chiefs, local capture.

Table 4 reports the rough estimations of costs for different selection methods:

Table 4. Targeting Costs of Selection Methods.

SELECTION METHOD	CATEGORICAL/ GEOGRAPHICAL	MEANS TEST	PMT	CBT	SELF- SELECTION
TARGETING COST					
Administrative	Low	Low/High	High	Low	Low/High
Private	Low	Low	Low/ High	Low/ High	High
Indirect	High	Low	Low	High	High
Social	Low	High	High	Low	Low
Political	Low/High	High	Low	High	Low

Note: PMT = proxy means testing, CBT = community-based targeting

A trade-off needs to be made between targeting effectiveness and targeting costs (Sabates-Wheeler et al. 2015). Accurate beneficiary selection requires high administration capacities and strong enforcement rules, otherwise the identification of those who are eligible for a programme is unlikely to be effective. A common approach for assessing targeting effectiveness is to compare under-coverage and leakage rates (Cornia and Stewart 1993; Coady et al. 2013). These rates usually mirror targeting errors of exclusion and inclusion. Exclusion errors (errors of type I) are defined as the share of beneficiaries not receiving social transfers despite fulfilling the required eligibility criteria. Inclusion errors (errors of type II) are defined as the share of beneficiaries receiving social transfers despite not fulfilling the required eligibility criteria. Table 5 illustrates in more detail that exclusion errors are equal to  $B/(A+B)$  and inclusions errors are equal to  $C/(A+C)$ .

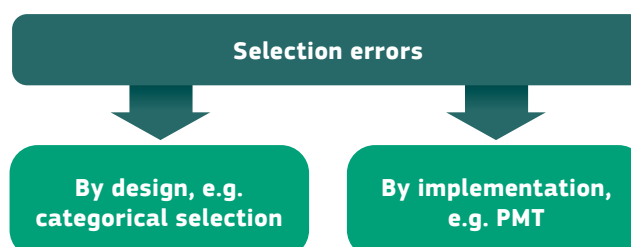
Inclusion errors are of more concern to governments and to those funding a social transfer programme, since costs are increased. On the other hand, exclusion errors deprive eligible individuals of receiving resources they most likely depend on, and are thus of concern to those involved with the rights of social protection (Devereux et al. 2017). However, Cornia and Stewart (1993) suggest weighting exclusion errors higher than inclusion errors on the basis that failing to include people in need is more serious than failing to exclude non-poor individuals from receiving social transfers. This is especially important in fragile contexts. Consequently, inclusion errors may be more acceptable than exclusion errors.

Selection errors can result from both programme design and implementation. Errors occurring **by design** are closely linked with the question of how to define the neediest (Braun and Gatzweiler 2014; Devereux et al. 2017). Clearly, perfect selection in terms of reaching all poor (eligible) and excluding all non-poor (non-eligible) people is unrealistic. Nonetheless, the scale of exclusion and inclusion errors in relation to the costs must be justified.

Table 5. Selection Errors.

		PROGRAMME CLASSIFICATION	
		Eligible	Non-Eligible
ACTUAL STATUS	Eligible	Correct Selection (A)	Exclusion by error (Type I) (B)
	Non-Eligible	Inclusion by error (Type II) (C)	Correct Non-Selection (D)

Errors caused **by implementation** typically originate from more complex selection methods. Brown et al. (2017) assess the targeting performance of various implemented PMTs in African countries and show that while inclusion errors are roughly halved, exclusion errors remain high due to overestimated living standards for the poor being predicted by the econometric models. Employing econometric simulation exercises to evaluate the targeting accuracy of PMTs in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Rwanda, and Sri Lanka, Kidd and Wylde (2011) argue that they are inherently inaccurate. Their results revealed high in-built errors which increase in magnitude by decreasing size of the targeted population. Reasons for these inaccuracies are due to imperfect correlation between multiple proxies and household consumption, sampling errors in household survey design, and inaccuracies in the household survey analysis.



### Evaluation of targeting errors by design: PROGRESA example

**A study evaluating the targeting performance of the Health, Education, and Nutrition Programme (PROGRESA) of Mexico presents one possible approach of how to estimate the severity of targeting errors by design.** The PROGRESA uses rigorous statistical methods to identify the extremely poor and assure objectivity in the selection process. Targeting errors are considered to be low if they apply mostly to the households close to the poverty line, i.e. those households just above or below the cut-off. The targeting strategy of PROGRESA, which uses a marginality index based on consumption levels, is compared to a geographical and a universal targeting approach. The severity of exclusion and inclusion errors can be estimated based on a predefined poverty index across the three targeting approaches. Both for exclusion and inclusion rates the PROGRESA targeting method outperforms the other two approaches. The households wrongly excluded or included in the programme are close to the poverty line, suggesting low severity of targeting errors by design under the PROGRESA method of targeting

(Skoufias et al. 2001)



Table 6. Selection Errors in Fragile Contexts.

	INCLUSION ERRORS	EXCLUSION ERRORS
By design	Hard to minimise, so costly but humanitarian support implies emergency responses so can be justified	Might be minimised by using very broad selection methods such as categorical or geographical selection
By implementation	Might be minimised by using self-selection methods or time-limited provision of benefits	Might be reduced by using local expertise like a community-based approach.

# —4—

## Conditionalities as a selection tool

**Conditional cash transfers (CCTs) occupy a special niche among poverty alleviation tools in developing countries.** They not only improve short-term consumption and reduce vulnerability but also increase investment in human capital, implying long-term sustainable development. However, they have recently been criticised because of costly enforcement and the exclusion of poor households who experience difficulties in complying with certain behavioural rules (e.g. Baird et al. 2011). Another risk from a social inclusion point of view is that recipients might be prevented by some other barrier from accessing the services upon which the transfer is conditional.

**Nevertheless, there are two main advantages of CCTs from the targeting point of view.** First, CCTs are considered as programmes with a self-selection mechanism, because potential beneficiaries decide for themselves whether they can bear additional costs in order to receive a social grant for maintaining their minimal living standards. Poor households incur costs for programme participation, and if they are willing to invest in children's human capital, they are self-selected into such programmes.

**Second, the costs incurred, for example school enrolment, may decrease current household consumption due to a loss of income from child labour.** School enrolment can thus be an indicator for low consumption households. This allows governments to target social benefits towards a specific group; in this example, households with lower consumption. This unexplored benefit of CCTs can be considered as a targeting benefit (Bergstrom and Dodds, 2018). It depends on the particular context whether this targeting benefit of CCTs is large or small. Specifically, it is defined by the distribution of income of eligible households, potential child earnings, and marginal utility from consumption.

**In fragile contexts, CCTs might have some potential if people can obtain additional benefits or food for adhering to certain behavioural rules like health check-ups (upon service availability).** Especially after natural disasters or conflict events, this might be effective to maintain human capital. Such an approach would help to minimise inclusion errors, as in this case potential beneficiaries would need to incur costs to obtain social benefits. However, it might increase exclusion errors if people face barriers to complying with conditions.

## —5—

# Hybrid solutions for beneficiary selection

**Best practices suggest that a combination of selection methods is likely to reduce exclusion and inclusion errors, bring complementary strengths and enhance the overall effectiveness of targeting** (Grosh et al. 2008; Coady et al. 2004; Mills et al. 2015). For example, Kenya's Hunger Safety Net Programme relies on geographical targeting, community-based targeting (CBT), and a proxy means test (PMT); Mexico's PROSPERA programme combines geographical targeting and a PMT; Brazil's Bolsa Familia applies geographical targeting and means testing; and the Public Works Programme in Malawi uses self-selection together with either CBT or a PMT. Among more than 180 social transfer programmes considered, only 35 per cent employ a single targeting method (Dodlova et al. 2018a). About 15 per cent of all programmes apply three or more selection methods. The most frequent choices of targeting methods are categorical criteria, a means test or proxy means test only, combination of a means test and categorical criteria, and a combination of geographical with all other criteria. The combination of selection methods can assure flexibility, which is essential in times of crisis.

Hybrid/mixed selection methods **combining both participatory and statistical tools** are currently a widespread tendency for the selection of beneficiaries, as they include triangulation mechanisms and combine the benefits of both methods, thereby improving the quality of results. The broad use of a combination of PWR methods based on the household economy analysis along with the statistical analysis produces efficient solutions to identify the poorest and most vulnerable. However, this approach requires strong facilitation and analytical skills as well as the field presence of teams.

**In some cases, a mix of selection procedures is required by design.** For example, when the number of applicants exceeds the number of jobs in the public works programme, additional selection methods need to be implemented (e.g. means tests or proxy means tests). In the latter case, the programme is no longer self-selected.

**One crucial issue while following a mixed-method approach is order of targeting.** For example, the use of geographical targeting is recommended as the first stage within a multi-stage targeting framework (Devereux et al. 2017).

Another trade-off is how to reconcile self-selection (a potential beneficiary decides on his/her eligibility himself/herself) with screening mechanisms (where any other party, government or community actor or expert decides on eligibility). In programmes using self-selection, a potential beneficiary should apply for and incur a cost to receive a social benefit; for example, he or she should wait in a line (time cost), help to implement a project (public works), or express an interest in getting low-quality food (inferior food programmes). Hence, a potential beneficiary decides on his or her own whether he or she needs and deserves a transfer. In screening methods, a government or a social chief (any other actor except a beneficiary) decides on the beneficiary's eligibility. Good examples are means testing, PMT or community-based programmes. Combining self-selection and screening approaches in beneficiary selection helps to reconcile rights- and needs-based approaches. While universalism in distributing social benefits expresses a rights-based approach, self-selection also gives people a right to choose whether or not to participate in a programme.

## Bolsa Familia: mix of geographical selection and means testing

**The Bolsa Familia Programme in Brazil uses means testing in combination with geographical targeting to identify eligible households.** The programme was created in 2003 through the unification of four existing cash transfer programmes to increase the efficiency of assistance and to scale it up towards the goal of universal coverage. Bolsa Familia provides conditional cash transfers to poor households with the objective of reducing current poverty and inequality, breaking the inter-generational transmission of poverty, and empowering beneficiary families. A unique database and social identification number were developed to determine eligibility and for further monitoring and evaluation purposes. Geographical targeting is applied at the municipality level and the federal level, employing set quotas to minimise issues of moral hazard and to enable municipalities to allocate the limited resources to the truly poor. Once the geographical quotas are implemented, means testing is conducted by selecting families with per-capita income below the poverty line.

*(Lindert et al. 2007)*

It has been shown that exclusion errors are smaller as a result of applying screening at the first stage and self-selection at the second stage, while inclusion errors are larger (Bergstrom, 2018). Recent results show that the objective and fiscal choices at Phases 1 and 2 should determine which selection mechanism is used first. Depending on whether the purpose is to maximise programme coverage or cost (transfer size), screening or self-selection approaches can be used at the first stage (Bergstrom, 2018).

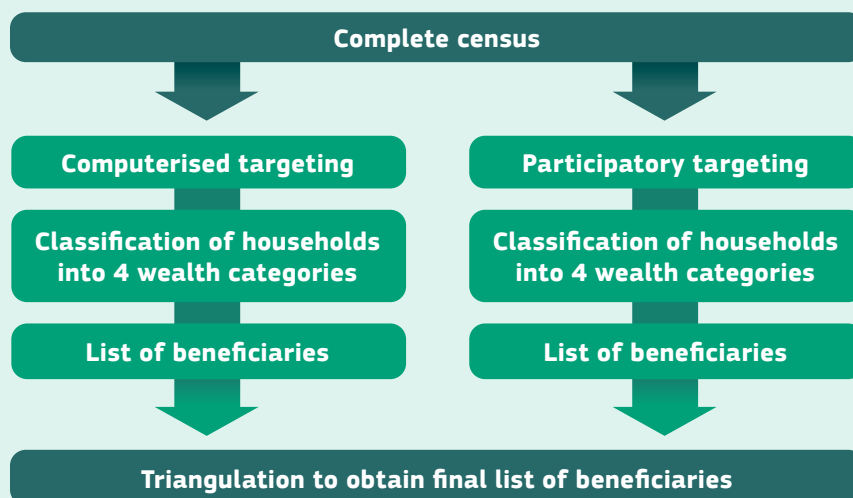
## Mixed/ hybrid selection process based on both participatory/'traditional' methods, adapted to complex contexts: example of northern Mali

The targeting method commonly used by international NGOs in northern Mali, particularly the members of the EUD-funded ARC initiative or NGOs receiving funding from DG ECHO, was developed in the aftermath of the 2012 crisis in a context of weak state presence, high security risks and presence of 'gate-keepers' leading to risk of fraud. The methodology is based on continuous participation of the population, is relatively simple, includes control mechanisms and is feasible in a volatile context. It requires the strong field presence of teams to ensure facilitation and supervision.

The selection process developed by ACF includes the following steps (ACF, 2018):

- use of Participatory Wealth Ranking to classify households according to four wealth groups, or alternatively, use of existing HEA (Household Economy Analysis) profiles of the livelihood zone, to identify specific key parameters ('proxies') for poverty in line with the local context;
- realisation of a complete census of the population, including collection of demographic data and poverty-related key parameters, both across sedentary villages and pastoral sites;
- establishment of a database;
- data analysis to rank households according to poverty and identify the poorest households;
- organisation of a community targeting process for villages and creation of a provisional list of beneficiaries.
- triangulation of data from the computerised targeting process with those from participatory targeting to finalise the list of beneficiaries.

The main steps of the approach include the following:



(World Food Programme, 2018)

In the following table we list several popular combinations of selection methods used in fragile contexts:

Table 7. Hybrid Solutions in Fragile Contexts.

SHOCK TYPE	EXAMPLES OF HYBRID SOLUTIONS
Economic shock	<p><b>Malawi's Social Cash Transfer Programme (SCTP):</b> community-based and categorical targeting with PMT that provides a voluntary alert indicator. First, a community committee identifies the 15 per cent poorest and labour-constrained households in its village cluster. Then enumerators visit the selected households and conduct a survey using a standard household questionnaire. Based on the survey, the categorical condition 'labour-constrained' is verified using a specific formula. Then each household is assigned to one of five poverty categories. Eligible households are those which meet both categorical conditions (poorest and labour-constrained).</p>
Conflict	<p><b>Yemen Emergency Crisis Response (ECPR):</b> geographical and multi-layered PMT targeting based on a 'distress index' that is constructed by determining the spread and intensity of people with emergency needs and food insecurity, and the level and intensity of IDPs/returnees.</p> <p><b>Serra Leone Youth Employment Support Project:</b> geographical and self-selection with the extensive use of mobile technology for registration, monitoring and evaluation.</p> <p><b>West Bank and Gaza Cash Transfer Programme:</b> geographical and PMT targeting based on the unified registry operated by the Ministry of Social Affairs and a uniform payment modality.</p>

<p><b>Climate shocks and disasters</b></p>	<p><b>Ethiopian Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP):</b> geographical targeting and CBT where geographical targeting at first stage is used to select areas with high prevalence of food insecurity and then a community committee ranks the neediest households according to their food gap, relying on both local knowledge and proxy indicators of food insecurity.</p> <p><b>Kenyan Hunger Safety Net Programme:</b> categorical, geographical targeting, PMT and CBT. A PMT is used to assess ownership of assets and enrolment in other programmes of households with orphans, elderly people or people with disabilities in selected areas; community agents rank the pre-selected households into different poverty categories.</p> <p><b>Yemen's Social Fund for Development:</b> geographical, PMTplus and means test. In selected areas, the administrators can shift up the PMT cut-off point to rapidly increase beneficiary coverage in a face of a crisis; then a means test is applied to measure food insecurity in the areas affected by the shock using a quick survey; the results of the PMT and the means test are then cross-validated.</p> <p><b>Mexico's Temporary Employment Programme:</b> geographical, marginalisation index and self-selection. In disaster-affected communities, a housing and property damage survey is used to assess livelihood losses. Eligible households are granted temporary employment opportunities on public works.</p>
<p><b>Pandemic</b></p>	<p><b>Guinean Productive Safety Nets Project after Ebola crisis:</b> geographical and self-selection by providing temporary jobs in the most affected regions.</p> <p><b>Liberia after Ebola crisis:</b> geographical and community-based interventions using multiple coping strategies like community-based surveillance response systems, community health workers and information dissemination, but also self-reliance and psychological support.</p>

In many contexts, hybrid solutions are preferred, since beneficiary-selection effectiveness is improved by employing multiple identification instruments. However, in case of low capacity and the necessity for immediate response, single selection methods can also demonstrate high efficiency. The specific advantages and disadvantages of every selection method under different shocks and response types are listed in Table 8. These can also be taken into account when combining selection methods.

Table 8. Beneficiary-Selection Methods in Fragile Contexts

SHOCK TYPE	POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF SELECTION METHODS
<b>Economic shock</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verified means testing, PMT (proxy means testing), CBT (community-based targeting) and self-selection can demonstrate high efficiency in addressing economic regressions, high unemployment, and hampered business.</li> <li>• The use of categorical/geographical targeting and non-verified means testing can lead to high inclusion errors.</li> </ul>
<b>Conflict</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Categorical/geographical methods can efficiently be used to identify the affected areas or population groups.</li> <li>• CBT helps to assess the damage, mobilise community forces and institutions for recovery, and increase social cohesion.</li> <li>• Self-selection is efficient in post-conflict recovery.</li> <li>• Poverty- or income-assessment methods like means testing or PMT are not optimal because of non-transparency and the threat of additional conflicts but might be helpful in constructing the marginalisation index or the scale of damage.</li> </ul>
<b>Climate shocks and disasters</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Categorical/geographical methods can be efficiently used to identify the affected areas or population groups.</li> <li>• PMT and PMTplus accounting for shock exposure demonstrate a high potential in overcoming the aftermath of disasters and climate shocks as well as in preventing them.</li> <li>• CBT helps to assess damage and food insecurity within communities.</li> <li>• Self-selection is efficient in post-disaster recovery.</li> </ul>
<b>Pandemic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Categorical/geographical methods can be efficiently used to identify the concerned areas or population groups.</li> <li>• PMT is helpful in evaluating exposure to a shock.</li> <li>• CBT and self-selection can be efficient in providing relief and recovery.</li> </ul>
RESPONSE TYPE	
<b>Immediate response to shocks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Categorical/geographical and non-verified means testing can be quickly implemented.</li> <li>• CBT and self-selection can be efficient, as their implementation does not require much preparation or exploit private information of communities and potential beneficiaries.</li> </ul>
<b>Prolonged response of resilience building</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More adequate and verified methods like PMT can be efficiently applied.</li> <li>• CBT remains helpful because of exploiting the local information advantage.</li> <li>• Categorical/geographical selection can efficiently be used at first stage to identify the needy areas or population groups.</li> <li>• Self-selection is especially effective in long-term recovery (e.g. public works, infrastructure projects).</li> <li>• More complex combinations of selection methods can be elaborated and adjusted over time.</li> </ul>

## —6—

# Implementation and Management Information Systems

**Variations in targeting performance originate from country-specific differences.** The poverty situation and fragility within the country have to be evaluated thoroughly in terms of depth, nature (chronic and transient), and spatial distribution. Along with the choice of humanitarian-programme objective and design, the implementation is one of the most important phases of the beneficiary-selection process (see Figure 1). Efficient implementation depends on operational and administrative capacities, data and management system resources, monitoring, evaluation and adaptation potential. Depending on the underlying approach, the response objective, the target group, and budget and administrative constraints, beneficiary selection can be realised in very different ways, with diverse practical implications for outreach and communications, registration/intake, enrolment, continuous monitoring and graduation. The implementation principles include impartiality, unhindered access, and equal conditions and opportunities for all eligible beneficiaries.

**Specific characteristics of shocks can also influence the targeting implementation.** Rapid-onset shocks (e.g. earthquakes, floods) are characterised by limited access to data and information; they often require immediate responses of beneficiary selection and do not allow any further adjustments in targeting the affected population. On the contrary, slow-onset shocks (e.g. droughts, on-going conflicts, pandemic) allow for preparing an efficient and timely response, updating data and monitoring damage, migration flows, food insecurity in the affected regions during the event, and more importantly, adjusting a humanitarian response to changing needs and emergencies. The targeting strategy is often a part of this adjustment process.

**The development of data capacity is one of the key components of the implementation process** (Barca and Beazley, 2019). Strategies for building data capacity should be followed with the use of modern technologies like smart cards, mobile phones, banking systems, electronic registries and **Management Information System (MIS)** platforms (e.g. Kosovo and the republic of Yemen). In particular, MIS platforms are critical for administering the programmes, including enrolment of potential beneficiaries, delivery of benefits, processing of appeals, etc. MIS make it possible to conduct integrated data management with equitable distribution of resources, systematic combination of multiple social safety programmes, oversight and evaluation. The **MIS components** within the programme are the following:

- Identification and registration of applicants and potential beneficiaries;
- Compliance with conditions in conditional cash transfer (CCT) and public works schemes;
- Management of appeals and grievance processes;
- Exit and graduation of beneficiaries;
- Production of payment lists;
- Reconciliation of payments.



The core MIS element is the creation of a well-designed centralised database or a social registry, which combines all current and potential beneficiaries and so facilitates preparedness for shocks and improves coordination across social assistance programmes and humanitarian responses. A functional registry can help to administer the programmes, disseminate information and increase coverage; it lowers beneficiary transaction costs and thus improves efficiency. It becomes possible to rapidly scale social assistance programmes up or down in response to shocks (Mills et al. 2015). Moreover, further integration of the databases of social programme beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries with national civil registries, poverty databases with additional data sources like disaster-response databases, climate and conflict data can facilitate vulnerability targeting, enhance early warning, facilitate real-time feedback and real-time awareness, and support the planning, design and delivery of assistance.

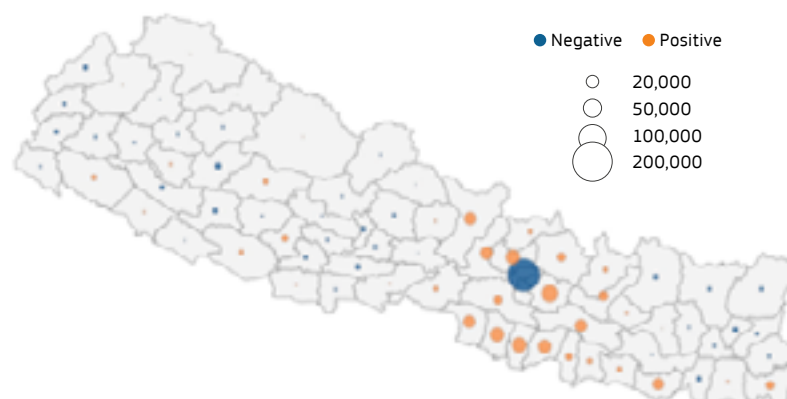
*Systems for Social Protection. Development Pathways.*

*Source: Mwasiaji (2016) Management Information*



### Using Big Data for tracing migration flows and disaster-relief aid allocation in Nepal

**Big data might be used to extract the information on conflict or natural disaster damage, migration, traffic, food insecurity and poverty.** Mobile operator data, geo-spatial or GIS data and web-scraping can be quite effective in searching out most affected areas and most suffering people. A good example is the initiative of Flowminder and Ncell (the largest mobile operator in Nepal), which collect detailed call records data to allocate disaster-relief aid. In the case of the Nepal 2015 earthquake it was possible to trace population outflows and inflows within the first 14 days and direct humanitarian assistance to areas with higher population inflows, as mapped below.



Source : <http://www.flowminder.org/case-studies/nepal-earthquake-2015>

### Smart phones as an effective tool of beneficiary identification in the Sierra Leone Youth Employment Support Project

The programme officers found a way to overcome the challenges of registry, payment system, monitoring and evaluation by using smart phones and mobile technology. *'Smart phones were used to register a comprehensive range of information/inputs. The phones were also operated on- and offline and used to upload data in real time, provided the beneficiaries had a SIM card and network coverage. Given the low capacity and absence of efficient beneficiary targeting and registry mechanisms, there was a general lack of identification documents, and the existing paper documentation suffered from errors and was difficult to access (Rosas and Martin 2014). Mobile technology was introduced in order to find a solution to the lack of documentation. Staff members were quickly trained to use smart phones to collect information on potential beneficiaries and to take photos for the beneficiary IDs. Each subproject registration with mobile technology lasted one day. Thus far, more than 6,600 beneficiaries have been registered in over 86 subproject sites. Where paper documentation existed, smart phones were used to digitize the information, which resulted in a digital beneficiary database. The database allows for enhanced coordination among different social protection players and institutions, by allowing for data sharing and comparison of information (Rosas and Martin 2014). The use of mobile technology in improving beneficiary registration resulted in a better payment system as well, through better data and payment flows. Upon registration, all beneficiary information is added to an electronic timesheet, wherein the payment amount is directly computed, and beneficiaries receive their SIM cards which are registered to be used for electronic payments.'*

(Ovadiya et al. 2015: pp. 34-35)

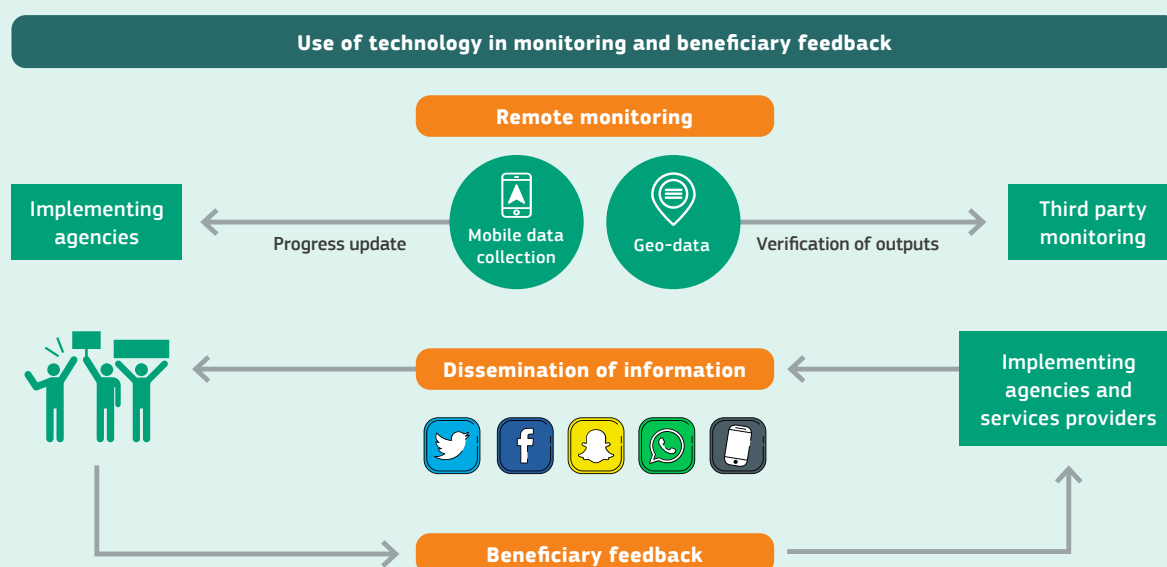
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## Monitoring and evaluation

Targeting performance assessment and evaluation constitute an important stage of the beneficiary-selection decision scheme (see Figure 2). Third-party monitoring, grievance mechanisms and other monitoring practices help to re-evaluate the beneficiary targeting process, correct selection biases and detect gaps in coverage. Constant tracking of inclusion/exclusion errors, occasional abuses, design manipulations and other inconsistencies is essential during any programme implementation. For example, Ethiopia's PSNP reassesses areas with food insecurity and retargets beneficiaries annually to improve targeting accuracy (Al-Ahmadi and de Silva, 2018). Further, fair and transparent appeals systems prove to be efficient in dealing with targeting errors. Information should be accessible to different groups within communities and should regularly be updated. For example, community key figures can be trained in the selection, verification, entitlement, and grievance procedures. Community level monitoring programmes can be launched, so that constant updates and feedback can be received. Further, the use of digital technologies, complaint hotlines, face-to-face communications and social media can be integrated for better oversight. The use of mobile phones and GPS devices helps to give quick access to reliable information.

### Feedback and Monitoring in the Emergency Crisis Response Project in Yemen

Yemen's Emergency Crisis Response Project (ECRP) started by the World Bank in 2016 extensively uses Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and other social media as well as modern technologies for getting feedback in an on-going conflict environment. It enacts the following scheme for monitoring beneficiaries:



The third-party monitoring agency works closely with trained community members who provide daily feedback using mobile and cloud-based applications. The feedback received makes it possible to learn from targeting errors, improve the quality of services, assure the credibility of the programme and achieve accountability of implementing agencies and service providers. The ECRP has also a specific scheme for complaints and appeals which allows it to constantly update and adjust the programme design and implementation.

(Al-Ahmadi and de Silva, 2018)

# Up-to-date experiences and context specificities

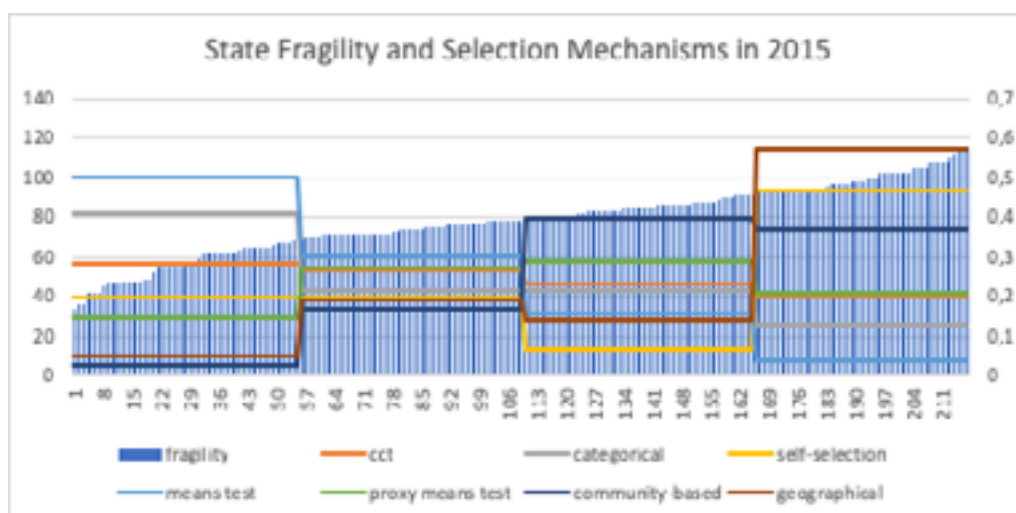
## State fragility and selection mechanisms

A comparative cross-country perspective allows for the study of whether fragile countries more often choose specific selection methods. The sample consists of more than 200 non-contributory large-scale social protection programmes, which are in operation in 2015 and implemented by national governments with or without donor assistance (NSTP dataset, Dodlova, 2018a).

A highly fragile country is a country with weak state capacity and low legitimacy where citizens are vulnerable to a range of shocks. Measuring fragility with the Fragile States Index constructed by the Fund for Peace<sup>3</sup> reveals differences in the applied selection methods across fragility quartiles. In highly fragile countries, **self-selection**, **geographical** and **community-based** targeting are the prevailing mechanisms of beneficiary selection. These methods work efficiently in fragile contexts, but they can also be strategically preferred because of a higher potential for eligibility manipulation in corrupt and shock-affected areas. CCTs (conditional cash transfers) and PMTs (proxy means tests) are equally adopted by countries in all quartiles. However, the purpose and rationale for choosing these methods in most and least fragile countries might be different. For example, in stable countries CCTs contribute to improving human capital, while in fragile contexts CCTs contribute to recovering human capital after crises and shocks.

Figure 4. State fragility and selection mechanisms used in social protection.

*Notes. The Fragile States Index is measured along the left vertical axis. Vertical blue bars indicate increasing fragility in countries ranked along the horizontal axis. The shares of specific selection mechanisms across fragility quartiles are measured along the right vertical axis.*



The same patterns are traced while considering the components of fragility, such as demographic pressures, group grievances, refugees and IDPs, and external intervention. In countries with high instability in these components, geographical and community-based selections remain among the most applied methods. Self-selection is also quite popular in such countries. Interestingly, a means test is used more often in the case of group grievance, and a PMT in the case of external intervention.

## —9—

# Systemic Failures

**Systemic failures in beneficiary selection arise when limited state or administrative capacity, higher rent-seeking environments and/or a high degree of political manipulation are associated with the design or implementation of social assistance programmes.**

**In cases of limited administrative capacity, selection mechanisms which incur minimum administrative costs are mostly effective.** These are categorical, geographical or community-based methods. In addition, in-kind transfers including school feeding programmes can be quite effective, as they are supposed to target the most suffering people experiencing high food insecurity. In-kind transfers might effectively be distributed in cases of emergencies and dysfunctional markets with the help of community structures like village chiefs in Timor-Leste or *femmes-mamans*, female vendors who prepare food for beneficiary children, in Togo (Ovadiya et al. 2015). The community approach in fragile contexts facilitates access to services and livelihood support and improves post-shock reconstruction by building local capacity for collective action and increasing social cohesion.

**Rent seeking can lead to large selection errors if policy makers choose selection mechanisms where a social chief or an officer plays a central role, as the probability of local capture and the distribution of benefits along kinship lines is quite high.** In these cases, selection mechanisms which either rely on intermediaries for beneficiary identification (CBT and means testing) or can be channelled towards specific regions (geographical targeting) show a higher potential for manipulation and discretionary spending. These methods are more effective in countries with participatory democracy and low levels of corruption. In particular, geographical selection is sometimes known as a method of ‘political targeting’. It can be used either to reward stronghold areas or to buy the support of particular regions. Several case studies address clientelism and vote-buying in social policy, and show that social benefits and public goods might be strategically used to increase popularity among the masses and gain or reward voters (De La O 2013; Manacorda et al. 2011; Nupia 2011; Zucco 2015).

## Geographical selection as a method of ‘political targeting’ in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) has been implemented in only four regional states. Among these four states, there are, for example, Tigray, where political support is high as it is a ruling party stronghold, and southern states where the opposition parties are dominant. In addition, the Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP) targets mostly areas bordering Somalia, where there is a risk of conflict.

*(Slater and Farrington, 2006)*

**By contrast, PMTs, categorical targeting and self-selection are recommended methods in countries which are prone to rent-seeking behaviour.** When implementing selection mechanisms that allow for more discretion in the allocation of benefits in corrupt countries, effective monitoring systems need to be in place to prevent possible misuse of funds (Dodlova et al. 2018b). Possibilities of fraud need to be addressed by exerting control; the effective detection of cheats and imposition of high penalties on them as well as repetitive updates on the targeting system should be part of the selection process. For example, the score algorithm for PMTs must *not* be made available to enumerators or interviewers.

### Selection drawbacks around elections in Colombia

A study in Colombia revealed that political manipulation took place within the local government, either by conducting a substantial portion of interviews before election periods or by changing, i.e. lowering, the poverty scores afterwards, once the composition of the PMT score was known. This suggests that conducting selection and identification activities, such as household interviews or data collection, in periods of elections is highly susceptible to fraud which undermines targeting performance.

*(Camacho and Conover, 2011)*

**Many challenges concerning the interaction of main stakeholders like governments, NGOs and donors arise in fragile contexts.** For example, governments may not allow other actors to select beneficiaries independently, even if it is more efficient in specific environments. In corrupt environments, a good strategy for channelling the funds from international donors can be to choose non-state actors like NGOs as implementing actors. Facing a dilemma that the countries in need are mostly those with a low quality of governance, donors may decide to bypass corrupt state actors by delivering social assistance to non-state actors (Acht et al., 2015). Apart from that, technical assistance and expertise of international donors on selection processes in different contexts can be helpful. For example, the World Bank helped to improve targeting by introducing PMT in the 2008 Social Welfare Fund beneficiary and applicant survey in the Republic of Yemen. The PMT method helped to reduce inclusion errors by distinguishing between non-poor beneficiaries and new poor beneficiaries (Ovadiya et al. 2015).

**The effectiveness of decentralising the selection process depends on the extent to which rent-seeking is prevalent within the local government.** If the local government compared to the central government is more vulnerable to capture due to a lack of accountability and the power of elites, decentralisation is likely to affect targeting effectiveness adversely (Bardhan, 2002). A study in West Bengal shows that while intra-village allocation of benefits is relatively accurate, significant leakage occurs in inter-village distribution. This effect is more pronounced for communities with high levels of poverty, low-caste households and inequality in land holding as a result of political discretion and lobbying power or the greater clout of representatives of each community. The use of statistical methods, such as a PMT, is recommended when resources are delivered across different communities instead of within the community. Furthermore, the allocation of a public good programme (local employment-generating programme) reveals a higher likelihood of elite capture compared to the allocation of private goods (credit or agricultural inputs), due to lack of transparency and vigilance (Bardhan and Mookherjee, 2006).

In recent years, increasing attention has been paid in the literature to the fact that decisions on social policies might be political (Hickey, 2009). The debates conclude that the choice of types of transfer schemes or selection mechanisms might be a result of the bargaining process between different interest groups, or simply of government populist policies or preferences (Browne 2015; Barrientos 2013). For example, McCord (2012) argues that the expansion of public works programmes in sub-Saharan Africa is a political decision of governments which prefer to reduce the dependency of the poor who are able to work on unconditional transfers. Another example is the change of targeting of cash transfers to children in Mongolia from means-tested to universal benefits on the basis of the new government's socialist values (Farrington and Slater, 2006). The role of donors might consist of keeping track that the design of social policy, including beneficiary identification, is objective and transparent and has not been chosen because of any national government's self-interest or ideology.

Table 7. Key lessons on beneficiary selection in case of systemic failures.

TYPE OF FAILURES	KEY MESSAGES
<b>Limited administrative capacity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selection methods which incur minimum administrative costs are preferred (e.g. categorical, geographical or community-based methods).</li> <li>• In-kind transfers directed to people with the use of categorical or community-based selection can be effective because of their self-selection potential.</li> <li>• Technical assistance and expertise of international donors on selection processes in different contexts can be helpful.</li> <li>• Building capacity is possible by using smart cards, mobile technology, electronic registries and management information system platforms in beneficiary-selection processes.</li> </ul>
<b>High rent seeking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selection decisions should not solely depend on an intermediary like a social chief or an officer, to avoid local capture.</li> <li>• If such selection is applied, then effective monitoring systems and high penalties should be a part of the selection process.</li> <li>• PMT is preferred to exclude significant leakage due its non-transparency and complexity.</li> <li>• For programmes funded by international donors, NGOs might be better implementing actors than corrupt governments.</li> </ul>
<b>Political manipulation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Geographical selection should be used with caution because of possible manipulations.</li> <li>• Household survey and data collection for selection purposes should be avoided in election periods. Similarly, enforcement procedures should be double checked around election dates.</li> <li>• International donors might contribute to avoiding biases in the design due to government ideology or the dominance of specific interest groups.</li> </ul>

## —10—

# Climate shocks and food insecurity

**Given the persuasive nature of both covariate shocks (where exposure to the shock is correlated across households) and idiosyncratic shocks (where exposure to the shock is not correlated across households), in most less-developed countries, effective methods that rapidly identify affected households are vital in order to offer both short-term relief and long-term assistance.** Frequent exposure to shocks usually results in higher levels of transient poverty, meaning that households move in and out of poverty repeatedly. Providing temporary social transfers to households that are vulnerable to transient poverty may be more difficult than providing continuous support to chronically poor households. Targeting households vulnerable to transient poverty requires flexible methods that adjust to changes in the well-being of households. In addition, the impact of a shock on the livelihood of households is dependent on their capabilities to cope with it in the first place.

**In Malawi**, where the majority of households are exposed to shocks very frequently, the targeting effectiveness of a PMT (proxy means test) was analysed. Despite the time gap between the exposure to shocks and its impact on the PMT score, the applied PMT formula was able to correctly select 75% of households that had been affected by a shock as eligible or ineligible. The exclusion rate was 31% and the inclusion rate was 52%. When looking at the principal shocks (illness or loss of breadwinner, crop loss, or livestock loss) separately, the PMT successfully identified 74% to 77% of households, with exclusion rates ranging from 19% to 33% and inclusion rates from 41% to 56%. The performance of the PMT was independent of the type of shocks. The results were slightly improved when additionally applying geographical targeting, namely only in districts where more than 31% of households have experienced a shock within the last year. To further improve the accuracy of the PMT, it is recommended also to rely on community involvement in order to correct errors by addressing dimensions of poverty that have not yet been captured (Cnoblach and Subbarao 2015). CBT (community-based targeting) is a helpful tool for identifying the chronic poor within a clearly defined community. Furthermore, in post-crisis situations, community agents are able to rapidly identify those affected by a shock, even within a more heterogeneously structured community (Milles et al. 2015).

Overall, analysing the strategies employed by vulnerable households to cope with shocks, and the effectiveness of these for mitigating the impact of shocks, can be beneficial for identifying adequate selection indicators (Groover et al. 2015).

A drawback of the PMT mechanism lies in its insensitivity in response to spontaneous alterations of welfare. Particularly, crucial information on whether a household was hit by a shock cannot be captured (Basurto et al. 2017). To account for the impact of major shocks on the eligibility status of households, an extension of the PMT called the **PMTplus** can be applied. The fundamental idea of this method is that the cut-off point for a PMT can be adjusted in the event of a shock. Commonly, three additional strategies are known under PMTplus to accurately measure the impact of shocks on welfare. First, for covariate shocks regional information on climate shocks, drought, flooding, and historic rainfall is directly added into the PMT estimator. While the aggregated information may be correlated with household exposure to a shock, it is not a direct indicator of household exposure, leading to inclusion errors. Second, discrete indicators of household exposure to a shock are directly included into the PMT formula. This increases the method's accuracy. However, this information is not commonly available, and the information may be endogenous since households that are already poorer are very likely to suffer more heavily from a shock due to their higher vulnerability in the first place. Third, to account for possible endogeneity in the exposure to shocks, special types of models (e.g. endogenous treatment effect models) can be used to ensure that assessment of the impact of the shock is unbiased. Clearly, this method is very complex and depends on the availability of valid exclusion variables (variables that are correlated with exposure to shocks and affect the PMT score exclusively through their impact on exposure to shocks), which is often not given. After adding the variable which captures exposure to shocks based on one of the three strategies presented, the weighting associated with the impact of the shock needs to be incorporated into the **PMTplus** model.



Finally, a household is identified as vulnerable to shocks if it falls below a predefined threshold after being exposed to a shock (Mills et al. 2015). In any event, **PMTplus** is not designed to offer emergency support, but rather to support existing social protection programmes in expanding their outreach as soon as a shock has occurred (Leite 2015).

Vulnerability to climate change and international price fluctuation as well as a significant share of chronically food insecure households put high pressure on the social protection system in Kenya. Given such an environment, the **PMTplus** is highlighted to be a useful tool because it allows for rapidly expanding existing social assistance programmes to households affected by a recent shock (Leite 2015).

**Complex emergencies and natural disasters often have an adverse impact on food security in many less-developed countries.** Selecting appropriate metrics for food insecurity is critical to ensure an effective allocation of resources to people experiencing chronic hunger or the threat of a famine. A vast number of measures and concepts are used to define food insecurity, which can be broadly categorised into food security, availability, access, and utilisation. A detailed overview of the most commonly applied metrics is presented by Jones et al. (2013). The community-managed targeting and distribution approach introduced by Save the Children uses community agents to identify beneficiaries for food aid programmes based on food insecurity proxies which usually incorporate livestock and land ownership thresholds as well as economic activities. This method has been implemented in various countries. Evaluations of the targeting performance of selected countries display low inclusion errors ranging between 10 and 13 per cent in Zimbabwe and between 5 and 12 per cent in Tanzania (Mathys 2004). In Ethiopia, the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) uses geographical targeting at first stage to screen out areas with high prevalence of food insecurity from food secure areas. Then a community committee ranks the neediest households according to their food gap, relying on their knowledge as well as on proxy indicators of food insecurity. The PSNP is divided into a non-contributory and contributory scheme. Categorical targeting is utilised to differentiate between households with labour constraints, who receive transfers unconditionally, and those capable of working, who must complete public works activities in order to receive transfers. In addition, the PSNP is introducing full family targeting (FFT) to reinforce access to benefits by all family members. Under this approach, every household member receives a transfer despite some members being unable to work. The whole household is responsible for meeting the work requirements, so the able-bodied members work additionally to complete public works. Even though resources are primarily allocated to the target group, cases of elite capture have resulted in inclusion errors, while fixed quotas and targeting of geographic areas with high shares of food insecurity have caused exclusion errors (Slater and Farrington 2009).

## —11—

## Conflict contexts

In conflict-affected areas, additional degrees of complexity arise when identifying adversely affected households and disproportionately suffering population groups due to the lack of reliable data and generally low capacities. Thus, selection methods with lower degrees of complexity and administrative capacity, such as community-based, categorical (demographic and geographical) targeting, or self-selection methods may be more effective in identifying the transient poor.

More specifically, social assistance is likely to be distributed to the most suffering population groups like widows, orphaned children, veterans and people disabled by war or by landmines. Especially female-headed households and the disabled population will have increased in number after conflicts. So categorical selection based on gender and disability would help to provide immediate compensations to these population groups. Many programmes that directed transfers to ex-combatants, young men and those disabled by conflict have been already implemented in Sierra Leone, Angola, Rwanda and Sri Lanka (Holmes, 2011; McConnell, 2010; Carpenter et al., 2012). However, women are likely to benefit very little from cash transfers as, in Angola for example, ex-combatant men do not necessarily feel obliged to use benefits in the interests of their family or dependents (Ozerdem, 2008). The choice of categories for programme selection should depend on context information and programme objectives.

### Categorical gender-based targeting in post-war and post-earthquake Nepal

Thousands of young widows and single women appeared as the result of a decade of the Maoist conflict in 1996-2006. Among emergency assistance initiatives in post-conflict Nepal, the Peace Support Programme supported widows by providing them cash grants to reduce their burden and disproportional damage after the war. Such a gender-sensitive approach helps a faster recovery and transition to a peaceful society.

After the two magnitude-7 earthquakes in 2015, a high number of female-headed households lost their homes and lands. They were disproportionately damaged for several reasons; for example, they could not clear the debris without neighbours' or relatives' help. Single women could not receive disaster relief if it had already been claimed by male family members living with them. Some widows have been denied legal rights to land or property that belonged to their husbands. As an emergency response, UN Women and WHR established a multipurpose centre to provide economic, social and psychological assistance and dignity kit distribution to single women and female-headed households in the destroyed village of Dharmasthali. The other 13 centres have been created with the help of local NGOs in five districts, thanks to which women are getting a chance to recover and improve their living conditions.

Relief assistance can be provided on a geographical basis, as certain regions might be worst affected by conflict. The more local areas are targeted, the more effective such assistance can be. However, geographical targeting should be cautiously used because of migration: an initial location of a conflict may be not an area most severely affected, and the most suffering people can be forced to displace to neighbouring regions. The ongoing debates are about effective targeting of refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs). One solution is to direct social benefits on the basis of categorical selection using refugee or displacement status. In addition, the combination of this method with self-selection would significantly improve identification of the needy migrants. Cash transfers combined with cash/food-for-work programmes would help to simultaneously assist refugees and support local infrastructure development.

Other negative consequences of conflicts and wars are limited economic activities and employment options. In view of this, public work programmes might become an effective tool to give short-term jobs, on the one hand, and to enhance investments in infrastructure reconstruction, on the other hand. For example, in the Republic of Yemen after the 2011 political crisis, 65 per cent of the extreme poor were involved in 2000 community projects. In Afghanistan's National Solidarity Programme, community funds have been used for public works to restore infrastructure, rebuild schools and install water pumps for the benefit of over 13 million people (Ovadiya et al., 2015).

In post-conflict areas, improving social capital and mutual insurance may prove to be a necessary driver of the recovery process, so community-based selection would help to mobilise all forces within a community. Therefore, it is important for the government to build local capacity to manage transparent and non-politicised intra-community selection.

The rationale for using all these selection mechanisms is not only to better reach the most vulnerable and increase their nutrition and health but also to maintain a stable balance between different population groups. This is especially critical not only in the aftermath of conflicts but also in politically unstable areas. In violent, insecure areas, policy makers and donors should choose selection methods that would allow the avoidance of social exclusions and tensions within communities. In particular, self-selection methods should be applied first, and screening methods should be used at the second stage. Also, opaque PMT schemes might not be a perfect solution in such contexts. Otherwise selection might be particularly contentious in the case of ethnic or tribal conflicts. In all cases, the focus should be on coverage and impartiality (Harvey, 2009). In terms of targeting effectiveness, inclusion errors are allowed to be high, but exclusion errors should be minimised.

Irrespective of the method(s) chosen to identify potential beneficiaries, selection criteria need to be implemented in such a way that they can easily be modified to respond to the incremental impact of a violent conflict (Darcy, 2004; Marzo and Mori, 2012). For example, targeting methods that use on-going registration processes are particularly suitable in reaching households which have been adversely affected by conflicts, but have not yet been eligible for social assistance (Bastagli, 2014). Another good practice has been employed in West Bank and Gaza, where a unified registry of beneficiaries across social safety net programmes has been created to improve selection accuracy and crisis-response capacity. In times of stability, unified registries can reduce costs and improve selection. In post-conflict times, unified registries can be used to quickly identify the most suffering population and expand coverage by adjusting eligibility criteria (Ovadiya et al. 2015). In severely destroyed areas and in emergency situations, it might be hard to rely on PMT indicators because they are often based on household assets, which may have been affected by conflict. Flexibility, simplicity and transparency should be indispensable elements of any selection process in conflict-affected areas.

Table 9. Advantages of specific selection methods in post-conflict contexts.

CATEGORICAL	GEOGRAPHICAL	COMMUNITY-BASED/ PARTICIPATORY SELECTION	SELF-SELECTION
Easy to target transfers to the most suffering groups like female-headed households, widows, orphaned children, disabled people, veterans and ex-combatants.	Easy to target areas worst affected by conflict or politically unstable regions. The methods can be combined with others to address refugees, IDPs and split households.	Transparent and non-politicised intra-community selection can improve social capital and mutual insurance.	Public works provide short-term jobs and enhance investments in infrastructure reconstruction.

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