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Targeting Social Transfers in Pastoralist Societies

Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme Revisited

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ABSTRACT

In the Ethiopian highlands, the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) is a successful social safety net intervention in terms of both targeting and impact. By contrast, existing studies situated in the country's lowland Afar and Somali regions suggest that PSNP targeting is beset with difficulties. This is deeply concerning given that these predominantly agro-pastoral and pastoral areas have some of the country's highest levels of poverty and food insecurity and that there is an absence of viable livelihoods outside of pastoralism in these localities. In this paper, which draws on three rounds of household survey data from 2012, 2014, and 2016, we show that there has been no meaningful improvement in targeting performance since 2010. We assess five explanations for this – resources and under-coverage; the involvement of traditional leaders in targeting; insufficient training; attitudes of program implementers; and transparency – adducing that norms regarding fairness and a lack of transparency are the most likely explanations for continued poor targeting. The PSNP experience calls into question the effectiveness of technocratic fixes as well as the appropriateness of targeting transfers in pastoralist societies.

Keywords: social transfers; targeting; pastoralism; Ethiopia

1. INTRODUCTION

Targeting is one of the greatest challenges in the design and implementation of social transfer programs. It is associated with inclusion and exclusion errors; costs ranging from administrative to psycho-social and political; and secondary consequences, both positive and negative (Devereux et al. 2017). Yet, pragmatic considerations to ensure the most effective use of scarce public resources and achieve the greatest impacts for reducing poverty and strengthening food security mean that targeting is now commonplace in social transfer programming. While there is evidence showing that targeting can be effective (Coady, Grosh, and Hoddinott 2004), there is no mechanism that ensures 100 percent accuracy in identifying eligible beneficiaries. Further, selecting part of the population to receive transfers, while excluding others, is a political act even if it is merited on the basis of limited resources. This can engender a host of tensions and conflict and have unintended negative impacts on social relations and institutions. These risks are greatest in places where populations requiring social transfer support dwarf the program resources that are available.

Ethiopia is one such place. Since its inception in 2005, the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), one of the largest social transfer programs in sub-Saharan Africa, has sought to reduce chronic food insecurity. It uses a mix of categorical targeting, household assessment, and self-selection mechanisms to reach 8 million food insecure people. In the highland regions of Ethiopia, steady improvements in targeting have been realized through a combination of administrative and community mechanisms as well as significant investments by the Ethiopian government in capacitating lower-level implementation structures. Participation is higher for poorer households than the better-off in highland regions, with rates of participation by the wealthiest close to zero in many areas (Coll-Black et al. 2012; Berhane et al. 2016).

By contrast, existing studies of the country's lowland Afar and Somali regions suggested that PSNP targeting is beset with difficulties (Sabates-Wheeler, Lind, and Hoddinott 2013). These predominantly pastoral areas have some of the country's highest levels of poverty, food insecurity, and malnutrition, with many left behind by the region's rapidly accelerating processes of livestock commercialization. The prevalence of stunting and malnutrition in the region exceeds WHO emergency thresholds (Altare et al. 2016), while aggregate indicators conceal significant social variation across genders and other patterns of social difference (Catley et al. 2016).

Existing assessments of targeting in the lowlands were based on the initial rollout of the PSNP in 2010. The assessment by Sabates-Wheeler, Lind, and Hoddinott (2013) suggested that high levels of inclusion and exclusion errors reflected the involvement of traditional and informal authorities in beneficiary selection along with the practice of sharing within horizontal networks. Based in part on this work, efforts were made by the Government of Ethiopia to improve targeting in the lowlands, including the provision of training and measures to improve transparency. Given this and given that the PSNP is the first national social transfer program in eastern Africa to expand into pastoral areas, it is of interest to assess whether PSNP targeting in the Ethiopia lowlands has improved since 2010. Drawing on three additional rounds of survey data, from 2012, 2014, and 2016, this paper provides such as assessment. In so doing, it seeks to answer the question as to whether it is possible to effectively target social transfers in pastoralist societies.

2. TARGETING PROCESSES IN THE PSNP

Our data span two different phases of the PSNP: the third phase (PSNP3), which ran from 2010 to 2014; and the fourth phase (PSNP4), which is scheduled to operate from 2015 to 2020. The same four foundational principles guide targeting in both phases. Targeting should be *participatory* by involving communities in selection, verification, and validation of client lists. Targeting should be *fair* by using the program's selection criteria and not including or excluding households based on personal ties or discrimination. Targeting should be *transparent* by educating communities on selection criteria and selection lists, which must be posted publicly before a community meeting at which the selection list should be read aloud and verified. Finally, households should have access to an *appeals* mechanism to address inclusion and exclusion errors (MoA 2014).

Targeting is both annual, with recertification of clients and identification of graduates, and periodic. In regard to periodic processes, the federal government undertakes geographic targeting of regions, woredas (districts), and kebeles (sub-districts), which are included based on the prevalence of chronic food insecurity. Within PSNP woredas, new households are accepted if they received emergency relief assistance in the three years preceding 2016, when the PSNP4 was launched. Similarly, new woredas are included if they received emergency relief assistance in three of the five years preceding 2016.

At the woreda level, Woreda Food Security Task Forces (WFSTF) select kebeles to include, which must have received recurrent food assistance for at least three of the past five years. A full retargeting of safety net client households should happen every three to five years to accommodate changes in circumstances as well as address inclusion and exclusion errors. In practice, WFSTFs should inform allocations to respective Kebele Food Security Task Forces (KFSTF), who use locally relevant poverty criteria to determine allocations to communities. Allocations for communities are then communicated to Community Food Security Task Forces (CFSTF), which are responsible for identifying program beneficiaries.

Targeting at the community level begins by considering foundational eligibility. Beneficiary households are supposed to be members of the community who are chronically food insecure – that is, households that have faced continued food shortages (food gaps of three months or more annually) in the last three years. PSNP4 added supplementary criteria: household assets, non-farm income, and specific vulnerabilities, such as female-headed households or households with chronically ill or elderly members. Eligible households are then selected to receive permanent direct support, temporary direct support, or public works employment. The CFSTF submits final lists to the KFSTF, which compiles all CFSTF client lists to submit for woreda verification. Once woreda officials verify lists, CFSTFs are to hold community-level briefings to notify which households were included on the final list and open up the possibility for appeals.

While these targeting processes have remained largely constant over time, the program's poor targeting record in the lowlands led in PSNP4 to the introduction of new guidance for community-based approaches in lowland areas. These include 'community-based triangulation targeting', whereby separate

groups from the community select client households independently of one another. These efforts are additional to earlier measures to redress evidence of inclusion errors of wealthier households. Earlier evaluation findings that highlighted targeting problems prompted regional officials to step-up awareness-raising and capacity building efforts, to distribute client cards to beneficiaries, and to more closely monitor targeting decision-making. Evaluations of PSNP3 found that traditional leaders in the lowlands were involved in targeting processes, and in many cases determined who was included in the program, irrespective of the Food Security Task Forces that may have been established (Sabates-Wheeler et al. 2011; Lind et al. 2014).

3. DATA SOURCES AND METHODS

Data collection included a substantial qualitative component including focus group discussions (FGD) and key informant interviews; multiple rounds of quantitative household survey data; and interviews with woreda officials and implementers to assess the performance and outcomes of the PSNP in Afar and Somali.

Our quantitative data are taken from surveys fielded by the Central Statistical Authority of Ethiopia (CSA) as part of the 2010, 2012, 2014, and 2016 evaluations of the PSNP in the lowlands. The 2010 data – the same data used by Sabates-Wheeler, Lind and Hoddinott (2013) – were taken from a sample of ten woredas in Afar and eight woredas in Somali. Within these localities, three Enumeration Areas (EAs) corresponding to kebeles were randomly selected and within these, 30 households were randomly selected for interview, yielding samples of approximately 900 households in Afar and 700 households in Somali. In Afar, the same woredas were surveyed in 2012 and 2014, but EAs and households were re-sampled. This yields a panel survey of woredas, but repeated cross-sections of kebeles and households. The same procedure was followed in Somali in 2012; in 2014, three new woredas were added and two – where PSNP operations had ceased – were dropped. With the transition to PSNP4, the samples in Afar and Somali were expanded with 12 woredas randomly selected in each region. In each, three EAs were randomly selected and within these, 30 households were randomly selected for interview, yielding samples of approximately 1080 households in each region.

All surveys were fielded at approximately the same time of year between December and February. They all included three instruments: a household survey, a community survey, and a woreda process survey. The 2010, 2012, and 2014 instruments were virtually identical. New questions were added to the 2016 surveys – particularly the community and woreda surveys – but the format of the remaining materials was unchanged, allowing for comparisons with earlier rounds.

Qualitative research was intended to complement the quantitative survey by providing a deeper and more textured understanding of program impacts and dynamics concerning implementation. While qualitative data were collected in 2010, 2012, and 2014, this paper draws largely on that collected in 2016. For that work, a team of Ethiopian qualitative researchers visited eight woredas, four each in Afar and Somali. Key informant interviews were carried out with officials and program implementers at the regional, woreda, and kebele levels to build up a detailed understanding of issues around PSNP implementation. A structured interview format was used to obtain information on a range of issues, including procedures and processes for targeting, appeals and complaints, payments, public works, and preparations and actions for the provision of livelihood support. Community FGDs were held with women, men, young people, and those registered for permanent Direct Support payments.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Targeting performance

Sabates-Wheeler, Lind, and Hoddinott (2013) noted that livestock was the principal asset held by households in Afar and Somali, that livestock was unequally distributed, and that there was no correlation between livestock holdings and PSNP participation. We begin by updating those results, using data from the 2010, 2012, 2014, and 2016 PSNP evaluations described above

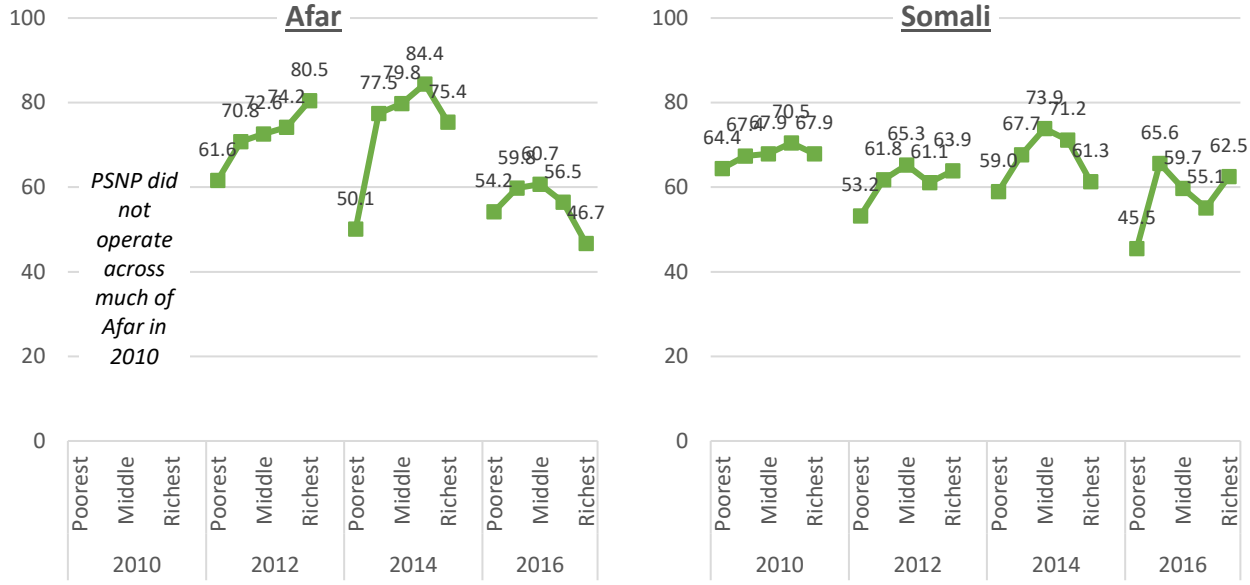
Table 4.1 reports mean levels of livestock holdings by livestock quintile, region, and year. As in Sabates-Wheeler, Lind, and Hoddinott (2013), livestock is measured in terms of Tropical Livestock Units (TLU). With the caveat that the sampled locations changed over time, Table 4.1 shows that in both Afar and Somali, livestock holdings are falling over time. It also shows that they remain remarkably unequally distributed. In 2016, the poorest two quintiles owned 0.2 and between 1.4 and 1.5 TLUs respectively. By contrast, the richest quintiles owned 18.9 (Afar) and 17.1 (Somali) TLUs. This pattern of unequal holdings of livestock remains if we adjust for household size.

Table 4.1. Mean livestock holdings, by livestock holding quintile, region, and year, in Tropical Livestock Units

Livestock holding quintile	Afar				Somali			
	2010	2012	2014	2016	2010	2012	2014	2016
Poorest	4.8	1.5	0.8	0.2	1.1	0.5	0.6	0.2
2nd	13.7	4.9	2.6	1.4	4.2	3.0	3.6	1.5
Middle	25.5	8.8	5.1	3.3	7.7	7.1	7.2	3.5
4th	42.4	18.0	10.1	6.6	14.6	14.6	12.7	6.1
Wealthiest	78.5	61.7	35.6	18.9	36.7	38.7	27.5	17.1

Source: Household quantitative survey: 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016.

Figure 4.1. PSNP participation rates by livestock quintile and year, Afar and Somali regions



Source: Household quantitative survey: 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016.

Figure 4.1 shows the percentage of households participating in the PSNP in Afar and Somali by survey year and quintile of livestock holding. The PSNP did not operate across much of Afar in 2010 (Sabates-Wheeler, Lind and Hoddinott 2013), so PSNP participation in Afar is shown only for 2012, 2014, and 2016.

In Afar, the likelihood of participation increases with livestock holdings in 2012 and 2014, while in 2016, it first rises then falls as livestock holdings increase. Nearly half of the poorest households in Afar were not selected for the PSNP in 2016, while 46 percent of the richest were included. In Somali, there is no evidence that PSNP targeting has improved since 2010; if anything, there is some suggestion that it has worsened. Across all four survey rounds from Somali, the group least likely to be included in the PSNP were households in the poorest livestock quintile. In 2016, the richest households in Somali were 17 percentage points more likely to be included in the PSNP than the poorest households.

Table 4.2. Characteristics of PSNP and non-PSNP households, Afar and Somali regions, 2016

	Afar				Somali			
	No PSNP	Any PSNP	Public Works	Perma-nent Direct Support	No PSNP	Any PSNP	Public Works	Perma-nent Direct Support
Demographic characteristics								
Head, age	39.5	42.5	39.8	51.2	45.3	39.6	42.6	56.8
Head's schooling, grade	1.1	0.5	0.6	0.2	1.2	0.7	0.8	0.0
Head female, %	28.4	31.9	27.6	45.5	21.9	24.0	15.8	58.7
Head married, %	79.7	78.7	85.1	58.5	77.4	78.8	86.1	48.0
Head widowed, %	7.1	10.2	4.6	27.6	8.9	12.5	6.0	40.0
Household size	5.3	5.7	6.1	4.8	4.9	5.7	6.0	4.2
Adults 16 to 60 years of age, number	2.4	2.6	2.7	2.2	2.0	2.3	2.5	1.6
Assets								
Productive assets (birr)	100	100	80	100	350	348	400	220
Consumer durables (birr)	500	500	557	300	1,173	895	980	570
Livestock, birr	12,500	9,500	9,000	10,500	10,163	12,100	13,800	7,600
All assets, birr	14,480	10,770	10,558	12,060	12,690	14,555	15,930	10,175
Livestock, TLU	3.66	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.30	3.63	3.85	2.30
Land, ha	0.05	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.31	0.27	0.31	0.50
Land per capita, ha	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.08	0.06	0.06	0.10
Housing quality								
Dwelling size, sq.m.	21.1	20.2	21.0	18.0	22.4	22.6	22.7	22.0
Metal roof on dwelling, %	8.1	3.7	3.9	3.3	32.0	16.3	16.7	14.7
Dwellings in poor or very poor condition, %	44.4	44.6	44.8	43.9	23.5	20.4	19.9	38.7
Social capital								
Head has held official position, %	5.6	7.0	8.2	3.3	2.4	6.9	8.2	1.3
Parent of head has held official position, %	5.1	4.5	4.6	4.1	3.4	4.1	4.1	4.0
Relative of head has held official position, % (Lowlands only)	19.1	27.4	28.9	22.8	15.6	12.7	16.4	12.0
Years resident	22.2	27.3	26.4	30.2	17.6	22.0	20.8	27.5

Source: Household quantitative survey: 2016. TLU = Tropical Livestock Unit.

One criticism of the graphs in Figure 4.1 is that they ignore other measures of wealth or other household characteristics that might affect selection into the PSNP, nor do they distinguish between selection into Public Works or Permanent Direct Support. We assess this in Table 4.2 using our data from the 2016 household surveys. In Afar, the total value of all assets held by the median Direct Support household were worth 83 percent (= (12,060/14,480) x 100) of what non-PSNP households held. The median Public Works household had assets worth 73 percent (= (10,558/14,480) x 100) of what non-PSNP

households held. By contrast, land holdings were essentially equal as were dimensions of housing quality. In Somali, the total value of all assets held by the median Permanent Direct Support household were worth 80 percent (= (10,175/12,690) x 100) of what non-PSNP households held. The median Public Works household was wealthier than then median non-PSNP household with assets worth 125 percent (= (15,930/12,690) x 100) of what non-PSNP households held. Land holdings were essentially the same as were some dimensions of housing quality (percent of dwellings in poor or very poor condition), although non-PSNP households were more likely to have houses with metal roofs.

Again, using the 2016 household surveys, we extend these comparisons by estimating a model that shows which household characteristics are associated with increased or decreased likelihood that a household was selected as part of the PSNP4 targeting process. We estimate a probit regression where the dependent variable equals one if the household was selected for the PSNP, zero otherwise. We include the following characteristics: grades of schooling of the household head; age of head; a dummy variable equaling one if the head is a widow; livestock holdings expressed in TLU; land holdings (in hectares); a dummy variable equaling one if the dwelling has a metal roof; a dummy variable equaling one if the dwelling is in poor or very poor condition; a dummy variable equaling one if the head holds an official position in the kebele; and a dummy variable equaling one if the household had lived in the community for five or fewer years. We convert our parameter estimates into marginal effects and calculate our standard errors accounting for clustering at the community (EA) level. Results, without and with woreda fixed effects, are shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3. Correlates of PSNP selection, 2016

	Afar		Somali	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Head's schooling, grades	-0.022**	-0.030**	-0.009	-0.018
	(-2.34)	(-3.39)	(-0.98)	(-1.48)
Age head, years	0.002	0.001	0.004**	0.005***
	(1.05)	(0.30)	(2.48)	(2.78)
Head is a widow, 0/1	0.049	0.005	-0.019	-0.048
	(0.69)	(0.06)	(-0.29)	(-0.67)
Livestock owned by household, TLU	-0.005	-0.003	-0.003	-0.005**
	(-1.88)	(-1.36)	(-0.73)	(-2.05)
Land holding, ha	-0.077	-0.024	-0.009	0.040**
	(-1.22)	(-1.66)	(-0.42)	(2.04)
Dwelling has metal roof, 0/1	-0.137	0.118	-0.202***	-0.123
	(-1.04)	(1.91)	(-2.89)	(-1.73)
Dwelling is in bad or very poor condition, 0/1	-0.029	-0.015	-0.019	0.063
	(-0.52)	(-0.25)	(-0.31)	(1.17)
Head holds official position, 0/1	0.074	0.037	0.257***	0.223**
	(0.77)	(0.40)	(3.39)	(2.56)
Household resident for 5 years or less, 0/1	-0.107**	-0.076	-0.130**	-0.145**
	(-2.00)	(-1.39)	(-2.23)	(-2.45)
Woreda fixed-effects	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	917	917	672	672

Source: Household quantitative survey: 2016.
Notes: Robust z-statistics in parentheses; *** p <0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. TLU = Tropical Livestock Unit.

Table 4.3 shows that there is a no association between livestock holdings and selection into the PSNP in Afar. While there is a negative association in Somali once we control for woreda fixed effects, the magnitude is small. In Somali, ownership of six TLU (the mean holdings of households in the second richest quintile of livestock holdings) reduces the predicted probability of selection into the PSNP by

1.8 percentage points (= 6 x -0.003). There is no association between land holdings or housing quality and PSNP participation in Afar. While there is a negative association with schooling, the magnitude is small. In Somali, once we control for woreda fixed effects, the likelihood of selection rises with land holdings and is independent of education of the head and housing quality. Having a household head hold an official position within the kebele increases the likelihood that the household is selected into the PSNP by 22 to 25 percentage points in Somali. Also, more recent residents in Somali appear to be excluded from PSNP in Somali; households resident for five years or less are 13 to 14 percentage points less likely to be selected.

These results show that the targeting of the PSNP in Ethiopia's lowland regions is both poor and has shown little evidence of improvement since 2010. This raises the question as to whether there is systematic exclusion of certain groups or whether the exclusion is purely random. Quantitative evidence from 2014 showed that the duration of residence in a locality predicted the likelihood of inclusion in the PSNP in the lowlands but not the highlands (Berhane et al. 2015): recent arrivals are far less likely to be included. Households living in a kebele for less than three years are much less likely to be PSNP participants than households who have resided in the kebele for a longer period. This is true in both Afar and Somali and occurs for both Public Works employment and access to Direct Support. For example, in Somali, 39 percent of households living for three years or less in their current locality were PSNP participants compared to 68 percent of those households living in the same locality for four to ten years.

Since the 2014 evaluation, which was the final evaluation of the program's third phase, retargeting under the latest phase of the PSNP has taken place, implying that some targeting errors should have been addressed. Qualitative interviews with KFSTFs probed whether migrants (newcomers) were excluded from receiving PSNP support. A major theme in these discussions was whether migrants arrived in time to be covered in the last targeting exercise. In the majority of kebeles, according to the KFSTF officials, newcomers are excluded if they arrived less than 5 years ago. In three kebeles, the newcomers are excluded only up until two years after arrival. Some officials complained that the caseload figure is not enough to cover permanent residents, let alone new arrivals.

Views from community members and PSNP beneficiaries on issues of migrant exclusion were diverse. Women's FGDs emphasized that recent migrants who are from the same clan or family lineages are indirectly covered because other PSNP clients share their transfers with them; in other areas, recent migrants are covered by emergency food aid. Men's FGDs emphasized that the period a migrant has stayed is important, and that those who have settled recently or since retargeting was conducted may not necessarily be covered and have to wait until the next targeting exercise.

Most traditional leaders stated that new community members (migrants) are not excluded from the program. Many migrants who arrive for short periods rely on food aid or informal support, rather than being targeted through the PSNP. Migrants who arrive after targeting must appeal to the woreda to be covered.

From the qualitative work it appears that recent migrants are frequently unable to access the PSNP due primarily to the fact that they missed the targeting process. Some communities indicate that poorer migrants can access emergency food distributions. Local officials in some areas acknowledge inclusion errors, but far more significant in their analysis is under-coverage and insufficient program resources to reach the population needing support. What seems to be happening is that, due to under-coverage, local level officials prioritize longer-term residents.

While these findings suggest that there may be persistent shortcomings in targeting outcomes, perceptions of the individuals tasked with selecting beneficiaries were generally very positive. When asked about whether targeting has been successful, members of KFSTFs in Afar and Somali replied:

It is certain that we are human and subject to make errors, but I can say our targeting was 100 percent perfect and we targeted the right people. Why I say this is that, first, we followed a participatory process and allowed every household to participate in the selection, as their representatives are there, and second, we do not see anyone reasonably arguing to be included. [SOM-HUD-KFSTF-2016]

We think that the PSNP transfers were targeted to the right people because the community fully accepted and approved the eligibility criteria and the targeting process is highly transparent. [AF-ELI-KFSTF-2016]

KFSTF officials explained that only households meeting the eligibility criteria were included, and that no better-off members of communities were included:

There were people we gave priority to like the mentally ill, female-headed households, people from other clans, and the ill. There were no other people whom we favored for other reasons. [SOM-SHI-KFSTF-2016]

Any better-off members of communities were not included in the program because the PSNP guidelines would not allow them. [AF-ELI-KFSTF-2016]

WFSTF officials were adamant that the right households were targeted and that there were no inclusion errors:

In our woreda, the PSNP does not favor particular family members, but it favors the right and eligible beneficiaries. There are no significant complaints on who was registered and not registered on the program. [AF-ELI-WFSTF-2016]

We believe the distributions and decisions are fair and correct. No families are favored. The targeting is done by committee, not by individuals, and thus it is hard to agree on favoring one beneficiary from others. We made sure that the committees selected by the community are good people, and we also monitored how targeting has occurred by interviewing communities. [SOM-HUD-WFSTF-2016]

As part of the 2010, 2012, 2014, and 2016 evaluations of the PSNP, these results were shared with regional and woreda officials in workshops held in both Afar and Somali. The quantitative findings were not disputed. Instead, in this public forum, officials pointed to limited program resources and difficulties in distinguishing between poor and non-poor households as explanations for poor targeting performance.

4.2. Explaining poor outcomes in targeting

Despite what officials and elders involved in targeting feel about the unbiased process of targeting, the quantitative data clearly and consistently indicate shortcomings in targeting processes. We assess five explanations for this: resources and under-coverage of food insecure populations; whether traditional leaders were included in the targeting process; lack of training for program implementers; attitudes towards targeting at different administrative levels; and transparency in targeting processes.

4.2.1. Resources

One explanation for the poor targeting performance is that there were insufficient resources to include all eligible households. In 2016, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected to address this possibility. As part of the community questionnaire, we asked kebele officials if there were sufficient work/program resources available for all households who are eligible to participate in the public works component of the PSNP. Results, shown in Table 4.4, tells us that two out of three kebeles in Afar, and 41 percent in Somali, perceive that they did not have sufficient resources to include all eligible households.

Table 4.4. Kebeles reporting that they had sufficient resources to employ all households eligible for Public Works in 2016, by region, percent

Region	Yes	No
Afar	36.1	63.9
Somali	58.6	41.4
All highland regions	29.1	70.9

Source: Community quantitative survey

We probed about resource availability in a second way. Kebele officials were asked about the number of households in their locality who were considered eligible for the Public Works component of the PSNP4, the number of households that were actually included, and the number of households that were considered eligible for the Public Works component but that were not selected to participate because there were insufficient work/program resources to employ them. This information, together with data on the number of households living in each locality, allows us to calculate the percentage of households considered eligible for the Public Works, the percentage of households selected, and the percentage of households not selected.

Table 4.5. PSNP Public Works – household eligibility and inclusion, by region, percent

Region	(1) Households considered by kebele officials to be eligible for Public Works	(2) Households included in Public Works component of PSNP	(3) Households eligible for Public Works component of PSNP but not included [= (1) – (2)]
Afar	57.1	43.2	13.9
Somali	46.1	37.6	8.5

Source: Community quantitative survey

Table 4.5 tells us that in Afar, kebele officials perceived that over half the households (57.1 percent) in their localities were eligible for Public Works employment but only 43.2 percent were included; analogous figures for Somali were 46.1 percent and 37.6 percent, respectively.

Woreda and kebele-level implementers insisted that a 'low quota' in part explains exclusion errors in targeting processes, as these quotes from our 2014 qualitative work show:

> *The allocation of food from the woreda has never been sufficient to cover the chronically food insecure households in the kebele. We reduced the number of households to be included in the program and, at the same time, reduced the number of people registered in each household. There are more than the targeted number of chronically food insecure households in the kebele. [AF-EWA-KFSTF-2014]*

> *The quota does not even cover half of the need in the kebele … We have appealed to the woreda and regional officials about the quota. [SOM-KB-KFSTF-2014]*

> *There are complaints about the number of beneficiaries and resources. There is a high caseload, and the resources are not enough. [AF-DUP-WFSTF-2014]*

In the 2016 evaluation, while woreda officials stated that there are few exclusion errors, in some areas they acknowledged difficulties in reaching all eligible.

> *There were no exclusions except for households who were omitted because they are better-off than those who were selected. But quotas can mean that some are left out of the programme, although they have only a few more assets than those who were selected. [SOM-ERE-WFSTF-2016]*

There are about 9,620 people targeted by the same criteria but were later excluded from the support because the quota was too low to include all the needy households. [AF-EWA-WFSTF-2016]

4.2.2. Training

A second explanation for poor targeting performance was that program implementers simply did not understand the criteria for selecting beneficiaries. With the introduction of PSNP4, efforts were made to train officials at all levels in targeting. Key informant interviews at the regional level undertaken as part of the 2016 evaluation indicated that training was provided to woreda and other lower-level officials on the PSNP4 targeting guidelines. To triangulate this, woreda officials (in most cases, the head of the woreda food security office) were asked both about information on targeting that they had received from the regional office and about the extent to which this information had been passed on to kebele officials.

As shown in Table 4.6, 83 percent of woredas in Afar and 78 percent of woredas in Somali reported that in the 12 months prior to the survey they had received information from the regional food security office on how to select PSNP beneficiaries. Where information had been received, in all woredas this had been conveyed at a meeting or training called by the regional food security office. However, only 58 percent of woredas in Afar and only 78 percent of woredas in Somali stated that they had all the information they needed for targeting. Table 4.6 also tells us about the efforts of woreda staff to train kebele officials and other community leaders on the selection of PSNP beneficiaries. There were several woredas in Afar and Somali where training was not provided to kebeles (see Table 4.7); particularly in Afar, there were relatively few woredas where staff travelled to individual kebeles. (By contrast, in the highland regions all woredas reported providing training on targeting to kebeles.)

Table 4.6. Training on targeting at woreda-level, by region, percent of woredas

	Afar	Somali
In the last 12 months, have you received any information from the regional food security office on how to select PSNP beneficiaries?	83.3	77.8
If received, did you receive this information at a meeting or training called by the region?	100.0	100.0
Do you feel you have all the information you need to ensure that the PSNP is properly targeted in this woreda?	58.3	77.8
In the last 12 months, have you provided information or training to kebeles on how to select PSNP beneficiaries?	66.7	77.8
If training was provided:		
Did you provide this information at a meeting or training that you called?	87.5	100.0
Did you travel to kebeles to provide this information or training?	37.5	100.0

Source: Woreda quantitative survey. Note: Number of woredas in this sample are 12 in Afar and 9 in Somali.

It is one thing to receive training on targeting, it is another to understand the targeting criteria. As a way of testing the latter, we use "vignettes" – short descriptions of households – and asked woreda and kebele respondents to decide whether these households should receive PSNP benefits. While not widely used in economics, vignettes are used in other fields, such as medicine, to assess knowledge and understanding of a specific topic (Peabody et al. 2004). One vignette (not presented here) described the most straightforward cases of a household consisting of an elderly widow with no children to help her and with no effective labor. Over 90 percent of woreda and 80 percent kebele respondents in all regions identified the correct response: that of provision of Direct Support payments to the elderly widow. We present the results of the other vignettes in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7. Woreda and kebele responses to three vignettes on PSNP targeting criteria, by region, percent of respondents

	Woreda level respondents			Kebele level respondents		
Possible responses:	Be paid for doing Public Works for the PSNP	Receive Direct Support payments from PSNP	Receive neither Public Works nor Direct Support	Be paid for doing Public Works for the PSNP	Receive Direct Support payments from PSNP	Receive neither Public Works nor Direct Support
*Vignette 1: The household consists of a man and woman and three school-age children. They own an ox. Each year, they have a small surplus of food production that they sell in the market. The household should: **						
			Correct Response			**Correct Response**
Afar	25.0	0.0	75.0	22.2	16.7	50.0
Somali	22.2	0.0	77.8	17.2	6.9	75.9
*Vignette 2: The household consists of an elderly man, his wife and an able-bodied adult son. They can farm one timad of land, but do not grow enough food to feed themselves throughout the year. The household should: ***						
	Correct Response	**Correct Response**		**Correct Response**	**Correct Response**	
Afar	75.0	8.3	16.7	58.3	27.8	0.0
Somali	100.0	0.0	0.0	65.5	31.0	3.5
Vignette 3: The household consists of a man and woman and three school-age children. Both are able bodied. However, they only grow enough food to feed themselves for 9 months of the year. The household should:						
	Correct Response			**Correct Response**		
Afar	58.3	0.0	41.7	69.4	11.1	19.4
Somali	66.7	0.0	33.3	86.2	3.5	10.3

Source: Source: Woreda quantitative survey; Community quantitative survey.
Notes: * 11 percent of Afar kebele respondents did not know or could not say; ** 14 percent of Afar respondents at kebele level did not know/ could not say.

Across all vignettes in both regions there are no instances of woreda staff being unable to answer these vignettes or not knowing what an answer could be. Approximately one-quarter of woreda officials gave incorrect answers to the first vignette; all in Somali and most (83.3 percent) in Afar correctly answered the second vignette; and many staff (41.7 percent in Afar; 33.3 percent in Somali) did not know the correct answer to the third vignette. Not shown are the responses given to these questions by woreda officials in the highland regions. In those localities, nearly all woreda officials correctly answered vignettes 1 and 2 and most correctly answered vignette 3, suggesting that these vignettes were a good test of knowledge of targeting criteria.

We also administered the vignettes to kebele officials. Responses to vignettes 1 and 3 show that 11 percent to 16 percent of kebele officials in Afar could not answer these questions, a result consistent with the lower levels of training provided at this level. Just as we saw at the woreda level, in Afar and Somali, kebele officials were somewhat less likely to answer vignette 1 correctly.

4.2.3. Inclusion of traditional authorities in beneficiary selection

Sabates-Wheeler, Lind, and Hoddinott (2013) noted that traditional leaders played an informal but important role in beneficiary selection. Recognizing this, PSNP4 sought to formalize their participation in Kebele Food Security Task Forces in the expectation that this might improve targeting in the lowlands. The 2016 community survey indicated that 80 percent of KFSTFs included a traditional or clan leader. Qualitative interviews with KFSTFs in Afar and Somali confirmed the key involvement of traditional leaders in targeting processes, a view corroborated by traditional leaders themselves, as these quotes show:

> *They are both members of the targeting committee and the KFSTF. They participate in selecting households from each kebele and are often consulted on who is to be included. They are also part of the Kebele Appeals Committee. [SOM-GUR-KFSTF-2016]*

The clan leaders are traditional administrators. They are highly respected and trusted by the community. They were involved in the selection process and decision-making. [AF-GEW-KFSTF-2016]

Focus group discussions also asked about the roles of traditional leaders in targeting. Overall, 20 of 24 groups in Afar and Somali regions confirmed that traditional leaders have a role in targeting:

The elders helped the committee. They are the ones who know the community well. They know what you farm, how many goats you have. They helped the committee register the poor in the community. [AF-GUR-MFGD-2016]

They are those who are most often consulted. They decide who should be included and indicate those who were forgotten but are eligible. Their voices are well accepted. [SOM-ERE-PDS-FGD-2016]

4.2.4. Attitudes toward fairness

For training to be effective, it is important that officials understand and support the selection process used to identify PSNP clients. One conundrum in our data is that, while there is evidence in most places that the better-off are as likely to participate in the PSNP as are poorer households, community focus groups express broad satisfaction with targeting decisions. In order to deepen our understanding of local perceptions, our fieldwork in 2014 and 2016 probed further on societal attitudes towards 'fairness'. The majority of kebele traditional leaders thought that targeting was fair largely because clan leaders, religious leaders, women groups, and other community stakeholders were involved in the targeting process.

Yes, we are engaged in targeting. We are doing targeting fairly. According to our rules, if one has been found guilty of cheating in targeting activities, he or she is punished by having to pay 10 camels. Hence, no one will try to cheat in order to be involved in the safety net program. [AF-DUP/TL-FGD-2016]

Yes, we think targeting was fair. First, we established targeting committees and involved religious, elderly, and women groups. The outcome was posted for the community so that everybody sees who is included and can address any errors. It is only God that is perfect, but we tried our best to be fair. [SOM-DOL/TL-FGD-2016]

What is unstated in views such as these is what actually is meant by fairness in targeting. To assess understandings of fairness in more detail, we asked five "forced choice" questions regarding attitudes towards targeting. Table 4.8 lists these question pairs (a,b) along with woreda-level and kebele-level responses. The table is structured so that within each question pair, answering affirmatively to the first question (question 'a') represents an attitude towards targeting consistent with the objectives of the PSNP.

One-third of Afar woredas think that targeting will lead to tensions within their communities and the majority do not think it is possible to distinguish between poor and non-poor households (pair 2, b). A strikingly high percentage of woreda respondents in Afar (50 percent) agree with the statement that "It is only fair that local leaders in this woreda should receive PSNP transfers if they help with program implementation" (pair 5, b).

By contrast, woreda-level respondents in Somali at all levels are more likely to perceive that fairness implies that resources should flow to poorer households even though some also express the concern that targeting resources will lead to tensions in the community (Pair 2, b). Compared to Afar, woreda and community respondents in Somali are more confident in their ability to identify who is poor and target PSNP transfers towards them.

Table 4.8. Woreda and kebele level attitudes toward targeting, by region, percent of respondents

Pair		Woreda Level		Kebele Level	
		Afar	Somali	Afar	Somali
1	a) Fairness requires that only the poorest households in this woreda have access to PSNP benefits.	83.3	77.8	61.1	86.2
	b) Fairness requires that everyone in this community have access to PSNP benefits.	16.7	22.2	38.9	13.8
2	a) People in this woreda agree that PSNP payments should only go to some households, not all.	66.7	88.9	33.3	65.5
	b) There will be tension in this woreda if PSNP payments only go to some households.	33.3	11.1	66.7	34.5
3	a) We know who is poor in this woreda.	33.3	66.7	58.3	89.7
	b) It is difficult to distinguish between poor and less poor households in this woreda.	66.7	33.3	41.7	10.3
4	a) Because we know who is poor in this woreda, we can target PSNP transfers to those who need them most.	41.7	100.0	50.0	65.5
	b) Differences between households are so small that the only fair way to allocate PSNP transfers is to give them to many households.	58.3	0.0	50.0	34.5
5	a) It is only fair that PSNP transfers should only go to poor households.	50.0	66.7	75.0	89.7
	b) It is only fair that local leaders in this woreda should receive PSNP transfers if they help with program implementation	50.0	33.3	25.0	10.3

Source: Source: Woreda quantitative survey; Community quantitative survey.

Table 4.8 shows also kebele attitudes toward targeting. Afar officials were least likely to agree with statements consistent with targeting PSNP payments to poor households. Just under 40 percent agreed with the statement: “Fairness requires that everyone in this community have access to PSNP benefits”, whereas only 14 percent of Somali respondents felt the same way. Afar respondents were least likely to agree that, “It is only fair that PSNP transfers should only go to poor households.” They were most likely to believe that “It is difficult to distinguish between poor and less poor households in this kebele” and 50 percent believed that “Differences between households are so small that the only fair way to allocate PSNP transfers is to give them to many households.” Only 34 percent of officials in Somali shared these attitudes.

Crucially, influential local notions of ‘fairness’ in the lowland areas are that everyone should benefit regardless of wealth, and that targeting a minority of community members can engender tensions. This is borne out in quantitative data indicating high overall levels of participation. Targeting outcomes in Somali suggest that practices there are somewhat more in line with technocratic assumptions of targeting the poorest, but still wealthier households are more likely to benefit. Qualitative data from the 2014 evaluation provides more perspective on kebele attitudes in Afar, where respondents were most likely to report the possibility that targeting could engender tensions. Interviews with kebele Development Agents in some areas indicated that clan structure and family size affect how targeting decisions are made, with the relative size of clans influencing the selection of beneficiaries. Further, kebele leaders seek to prioritize members of their clans for selection. Thus, an element of favoritism is at play; yet, inter-clan politics and the need to balance allocations relative to the population size of different clans also factors in decision-making:

> *The allocation of the beneficiary number to each clan is based on the size of the clan not on the poverty level. The clans further distributed the beneficiary number to Dalls [sub-clan/family] within the clan. [AF-BUR-DA-2014]*

> *Kebele leaders give priority to their clans. If the leaders come from one clan, they give priority and benefits to members of their own clan. It is usual to find elders, disabled,*

and others who have other socioeconomic problems that are not considered for Direct Support, while others who are able-bodied are considered for Direct Support if they are from the same clan as kebele leaders. [AF-DUP-DA-2014]

The size of the clan affects the way targeting is done. Larger clans get more beneficiaries than those whose number is small. The targeting criterion are applied after the beneficiary numbers are allotted to each clan. [AF-GEW-DA-2014]

4.2.5. Transparency

Transparency in targeting processes is one of the four foundational principles to guide entry into the PSNP. An element of this is the public posting of beneficiary lists. The PSNP4 Programme Implementation Manual specifies that lists should be publicly posted for 10 days. We can think of the posting of these lists affecting targeting in three ways: it increases the likelihood that marginalized groups, widows, or households only recently formed or resident in the locality are selected; it reduces the likelihood that local leaders will include themselves in the program; and it should "sharpen" targeting based on wealth, for example by increasing the relative likelihood that a poor or destitute household is included and richer households excluded. Quantitative data indicates that few kebeles in Afar and Somali publicly post their participants list. In Afar, 22 percent of kebeles indicated that the client list was posted in at least one public place, whereas it was only 18 percent in Somali. (This compares with higher percentages in highland regions: 82 percent in Tigray; 79 percent in SNNP; 63 percent in Oromiya; and 59 percent in Amhara.)

We can use our quantitative data to explore this idea further. Specifically, our community level survey included a question about whether beneficiary lists were posted publicly. We disaggregate our regional samples by this variable and re-estimate the results shown in Table 4.3. We use exactly the same specification and regressors, i.e., age, sex, marital status of the household head, and the measures of household wealth. But, for brevity we only report the results for whether the household is headed by a widow, whether the household had been a local resident for five years or less, and whether the household head holds an official position in the kebele. These are shown in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9. Selected correlates of PSNP selection by region and posting of beneficiary list

	Afar		Somali	
	Beneficiary list posted	List not posted	Beneficiary list posted	List not posted
Head is a widow, 0/1	0.042	0.070	0.307	-0.182***
	(0.43)	(0.80)	(1.60)	(-2.96)
Household resident for 5 years or less, 0/1	-0.043	-0.140**	-0.106***	-0.197**
	(-0.40)	(-2.41)	(-3.02)	(-2.31)
Head holds official position, 0/1	0.060	0.064	0.223	0.240***
	(0.59)	(0.54)	(0.77)	(2.90)
Observations	223	694	120	410

Source: Household quantitative survey: 2016. Notes: Robust z-statistics in parentheses; *** p <0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

To interpret these results, consider the results for "Household resident for 5 years or less, 0/1" in Afar. The first column is based on the subset of households who live in kebeles where the PSNP beneficiary list is publicly posted. The coefficient, -0.043, tells us that, holding other characteristics constant, a household which has lived in the kebele for five years or less is 4.3 percentage points less likely to be a PSNP beneficiary. However, the z statistic is much less than 1.96 and so this association is not statistically significant. The second column is based on the subset of Afar households who live in kebeles where the PSNP beneficiary list was not publicly posted. The statistically significant number -0.140 tells us that when the household has lived in such kebeles for less than five years, the household is 14.0 percentage points

less likely to be a PSNP beneficiary. Comparing these results, we see that in Afar not publicly posting the beneficiary list is associated with a much lower likelihood that recent arrivals are selected to become PSNP beneficiaries. We also see the association between being a kebele official and PSNP selection in Somali is higher when the beneficiary list is not publicly posted. In other regions, the estimates are similar. In Somali, recent residents are also less likely to be selected when lists are not posted.

Next, we look at widows. In Somali, in kebeles where the list is posted, widows are 30 percentage points more likely to be selected, though this effect is not statistically significant. But in kebeles where the list is not posted, widows are 18 percentage points less likely to be selected, and this association is statistically significant.

Do posting lists sharpen targeting based on wealth? To explore this, we extend the method used to develop Table 4.9 to generate Table 4.10. For each region, we calculate two sets of probabilities of these different groups being selected for the PSNP. One set is calculated for households where the beneficiary list was posted; the second for households where the beneficiary list was not posted. If posting the beneficiary lists makes targeting more focused on poor households and leads to the inclusion of fewer better-off households, we would expect to see a larger decline in the likelihood of selection when we compare the difference between poor and rich households living in places where the list is posted against the difference between poor and rich households living in places where the beneficiary list is not posted. As Table 4.10 shows, in Afar, where lists are publicly posted, rich households are 11.3 percentage points less likely (= 68.4 - 57.1) to be selected for the PSNP than are destitute households. Where lists are not posted, this difference is actually slightly larger, 14.7 percentage points (= 58.8 - 44.1). A similar pattern is seen in Somali.

Table 4.10. Predicted likelihood for selection into the PSNP by household wealth, region and posting of beneficiary list, percent likelihood

	Afar		Somali	
	Beneficiary list posted	List not posted	Beneficiary list posted	List not posted
Destitute	68.4	58.8	71.5	76.9
Median	72.6	59.3	70.9	74.0
Rich	57.1	44.1	58.8	54.5
Difference between destitute and rich	11.3	14.7	12.7	22.4

Source: Household quantitative survey: 2016.

Finally, it is worth noting that, while there are associations between posting of these lists and improvements in targeting along certain dimensions, only a minority of households (223/917 in Afar; 120/530 in Somali) reside in kebeles where these lists were posted.

When looking at these results, it is important to remember that kebeles that choose to post their beneficiary lists might differ in other ways from kebeles that do not post, and these differences might be associated with targeting performance. Also, it is possible that local officials in kebeles where they perceive that they have done a good job selecting beneficiaries might be more likely to post their lists publicly, and so the causality runs from targeting to posting and not the other way around. Mindful of these caveats, these results suggest that improving the transparency of the targeting process, specifically by ensuring that beneficiary lists are publicly posted, is associated with improved targeting along some dimensions, such as residency and widowhood, but not others, such as wealth.

Transparency was also discussed in our qualitative fieldwork, in particular, efforts to widen community participation in targeting decision-making. The extent of improvement in targeting processes is variable, as these quotes from kebele and woreda officials show:

We call all the people and inform them of the eligibility criteria. They agree with these, and we involve them in the process of selecting clients and inform them of the final result. They can comment on who is selected and who is not. [SOM-ERE-WFSTF-2016]

The clan leaders mobilize the clan members and introduce the eligibility criteria and targeting procedures of the PSNP. Then afterwards the households discuss the targeting process in this way. [AF-GEW-KFSTF-2016]

When we have completed the targeting process with the help of the clan leaders, we read the names and have screened in front of the community. The communities have also raised some issues to amend our proposals. These issues were accepted and changes to the targeting were approved. [AF-ELI-KFSTF-2016]

As these quotes show, officials interpret 'participation' in varying ways. In some areas it is equated with community members themselves selecting clients in public meetings, discussing eligibility criteria, and validating and endorsing client lists. In other areas it is about inviting community members to a public meeting to report eligibility criteria and seek community endorsement of decisions made by KFSTFs or traditional leaders:

It is the KFSTF, the elders, and the religious leaders that gather together and select the beneficiaries. [SOM-HUD-KFSTF-2016]

The community elected this committee. We are seven members: two kebele members, two religious leaders, and three clan leaders. Since clan leaders know the status of our community very well, we selected people eligible for Direct Support and Public Works at the clan level. [AF-EWA-KFSTF-2016]

5. CONCLUSION

In the Ethiopian highlands, the PSNP is a successful social safety net intervention in terms of both targeting and impact (Berhane et al. 2015; 2016). By contrast, existing studies situated in the country's lowland Afar and Somali regions suggested that PSNP targeting is beset with difficulties (Sabates-Wheeler, Lind, and Hoddinott 2013). This is genuinely concerning given that these predominantly pastoral areas have some of the country's highest levels of poverty and food insecurity and given the absence of viable livelihoods outside of pastoralism in these localities. In this paper, drawing on three additional rounds of survey data from 2012, 2014, and 2016, we show that there has been no meaningful improvement in targeting performance since 2010. The absence of improvement cannot be attributed to an absence of information on targeting, as these results had been shared with the officials responsible for administering the PSNP in Afar and Somali. Nor can it be attributed to donor or federal government neglect. Based in part on this work, efforts were made by the Government of Ethiopia to improve targeting in the lowlands, including the provision of training and measures to improve transparency.

We consider five explanations for the absence of improvement: funding; training; the inclusion (or not) of traditional authorities; notions of fairness; and transparency. Two of these – funding and traditional authorities – do not appear to be persuasive explanations. Woreda and kebele authorities claimed that inadequate funding levels were a cause of program under-coverage. But the quantitative data they provided is not consistent with this, nor does it explain the high levels of inclusion of wealthy households. The analysis of the 2010 data suggested that the absence of traditional authority figures from formal targeting processes may have contributed to poor targeting, but by 2016 this has been remedied. A third explanation, inadequate training, has limited merit. There is evidence that training of program

implementers is in place; evidence from the vignettes given to these implementers suggest that PSNP targeting criteria are widely, if not fully, understood, especially in Afar.

This leaves two explanations, transparency and notions of fairness. On transparency, with the caveat that our findings are associational rather than causal, we find that efforts to improve transparency – for example through ensuring that beneficiary lists are publicly posted – are associated with improved targeting along some dimensions, such as length of residency and widowhood, but not others, such as wealth. But only a minority of households reside in localities where these lists were posted. The influence of societal norms around 'fairness' is particularly significant. A major element of local notions of 'fairness' in these areas are that everyone should benefit regardless of wealth, and that targeting a minority of community members can engender tensions. This is borne out in quantitative data indicating high overall levels of program participation. Targeting outcomes in Somali suggest that practices there are somewhat more in line with technocratic assumptions of targeting the poorest, but still wealthier households are more likely to benefit.

We end by considering the implications of these findings for the implementation of social protection interventions in pastoral areas and, more generally, for the targeting of these programs. Despite efforts to address continued problems with targeting in the lowlands, it is clear from the empirical work presented here that targeting remains a problem, especially in Afar. Notwithstanding the consistent qualitative finding that officials perceive targeting to be fair and with little exclusion, the quantitative data tells a very different story – with the wealthy as likely to be program beneficiaries as the poorest. It is possible that the very different concept of fairness in the lowlands explains some of this phenomenon. However, it is also possible that a culture of inequality and hierarchy is so institutionalized that the poorest people in these areas are less likely to know about or proactively request pro-poor treatment. These findings call into question, once again, the appropriateness of using targeting systems that were designed for the highlands in a lowland setting. More specifically, they suggest that 'technocratic approaches' that emphasize formal training will continue to founder when no attention is paid to the underlying social norms of program implementers. Absent shifts in these norms, provision of transfers to the poorest in these areas might be more effectively grounded in universalistic principles. As budget constraints are unlikely to allow universal transfer provision, however, other forms of provision that benefit whole communities, rather than individuals within communities, may prove to be more effective.

More generally, the use of community-based targeting in social protection interventions has implicitly assumed that community implementers share the same goals as program designers and policy makers. But where this is not the case, as we have seen here, program benefits are unlikely to reach their intended beneficiaries. More systematic efforts to further understand the norms and preferences that operate within these communities as well as appropriately promote changes in them can be very valuable.

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