

Rethinking "Targeting" in International Development

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Introduction

"Targeting" is a hot topic in international development, in particular in the field of social security, with fervent advocates on different sides of the debate. Yet, little thought has been given to whether "targeting" is an appropriate term to use in discussions on social policy. Back in 1995, Amartya Sen explained that a target is something that is fired at, and wondered whether, in social policy, it is helpful to see recipients of public services – such as social security – as passive targets to be hit.¹ As Box 1 suggests, perhaps a less de-humanising term than "targeting" should be used to describe the process of identifying recipients of public services. In reality, the process that we commonly referred to as "targeting" is really just a means of selecting people to access public services.

Box 1: Is "targeting" the most appropriate term?

I was recently speaking to a Deputy Minister of Finance in a Central Asian country who was struggling to translate a word into English. His translator responded with the word "targeting" and the Minister replied: "no, no, that's not it." He then offered his own translation, which was: "how we select people."

The Deputy Minister spoke a lot of sense. Targeting is not a great term to use within the context of social policy (at least, not progressive social policy). When people use the term targeting, what they are actually talking about – as explained in this paper – is shorthand for different steps in a selection and registration process. Governments first set criteria for inclusion in programmes

or public services; they then instigate an identification process in which people are assessed against the eligibility criteria for the scheme; finally, they register for the scheme those who have been selected.

The concept of viewing recipients of public services as "targets" to be hit corresponds well with a neoliberal concept of social policy, in which people receive "assistance" as a form of government charity. It is much less appropriate within a paradigm in which public services are regarded as "entitlements" offered to "citizens." Within this more progressive paradigm, a much less dehumanising term – such as "identification" or "selection" – is preferable.

However, my concern goes further. In international development, it seems to me that, when the aim of a policy is to "target" the poor, a "means to an end" has been elevated above the "end" itself. In other words, the activity to achieve a policy aim – the act of "targeting" – is prioritised over the objective of the policy, which should be

the inclusion of the poor. Therefore, rather than asking "how can we best target the poor" – which is an activity – we should, instead, focus on the aim and ask "how can we best help or reach the poor." As explained below, this aim is usually not best achieved by "targeting" the poor.

¹ See Sen (1995).

Once we focus on the aim of a particular policy rather than the means to achieve it, our understanding of “targeting” begins to change. Instead of an obsession with finding the most **accurate** selection methodology – i.e. the one with the best chance of hitting the human “target” – we can elevate our perspective and focus on the more humanising endeavour of ensuring that poor people are included in core public services such as social security, health or education. Indeed, the extent to which the correct people (usually the poor) are included in public services – which is the overriding aim of any selection process – should become the means by which the **effectiveness** of the selection process is assessed. This is very different to the

neoliberal focus on measuring the “accuracy” of hitting the target by minimising so-called “inclusion errors.”

Another consequence of focusing on the aims of social policies is a realisation that discussions on “targeting” are, in essence, ideological debates. Approaches to the selection of recipients reflect underlying convictions on the nature of taxation and redistribution. As the paper will explain, the key decision on “targeting” – within the context of public services such as social security, health and education – is the level of investment that governments are willing to make in these services. A higher investment will – as one would expect – lead to more effective inclusion of the poor.

Common Areas of Confusion in Discussions on “Targeting”

Before moving onto a description of how decisions on selection processes actually happen, it is necessary to clarify two common areas of confusion in discussions on “targeting:” the somewhat strange concept of “categorical targeting;” and, the important distinction between coverage and “targeting” methodologies.

“Categorical Targeting”

In recent years, a commonly used classification of “targeting” methodologies – found, for example, in the targeting manual of Coady, Grosh and Hoddinott (2004) – has caused significant misunderstandings. This classification usually sets out the following targeting methodologies: means tests, proxy means tests, community based targeting, self-selection and categorical targeting. The first four are evidently

methodologies for identifying the poor. However, confusion arises from the characterisation of “categorical targeting” as a technique for identifying the poor.

As the name suggests, categorical targeting refers to the process of identifying poor recipients by selecting a particular category of the population – such as older people or children – to receive a scheme, on the grounds that there is some correlation between this category of people and poverty. So, core social security schemes – such as old age pensions, disability benefits and child grants – are understood to be mere “targeting” mechanisms. The basis for this view appears to be the belief that the only policy driver behind social security is the desire to tackle poverty among the general population which, as Box 2 explains, is a very limited perspective.

Box 2: Policy drivers behind social security schemes

While a key aim of social security schemes is to reduce poverty, they often have other or multiple objectives. For example, pensions can be established to ensure dignity in old age while disability benefits often have the aim of compensating people with disabilities for the additional costs of accessing work. When Thailand and China extended their old age pensions, a key aim was to generate

greater domestic consumption and stimulate economic growth. Child benefits were put in place in Australia and France to increase fertility while, in contrast, old age pensions often serve to reduce fertility. It is not uncommon for social security schemes to be established with the aim of helping political parties win elections.

Yet, this understanding of core “categorical” social security schemes as mere “targeting” methodologies is, evidently, nonsensical. No government implements an old age pension so that it can identify – or “target” – poor households in general. Indeed, this would be a pretty ineffective approach since, for example, pensions for over-65s rarely reach more than 15% of households in developing countries. If a country aims to reach the poor in general, why would it adopt a scheme

reaching so few households? The approach would make even less sense if the pension were universal and only a minority of recipients were, in fact, poor. Indeed, as Box 3 indicates, in the case of pension systems – which, in reality, comprise both contributory and tax-financed schemes – it seems bizarre to see one element of the broader pension system classified as a “targeting” methodology for poor people in general.

Box 3: Pensions are complex systems, rather than simple targeting methodologies

The classification of disability and old age pensions as targeting methodologies demonstrates a weak understanding of such schemes. They are much more complex and are parts of broader social security systems. For example, rather than being simple targeting methodologies, old age and disability pension systems are usually multi-tiered, combining schemes funded by general government revenues and contributions. The mix between these funding sources varies from country to country but, when establishing this mix of schemes, governments are not thinking about identifying the best method with which to “target” poor households across the general population. Instead, they are aiming to build a system that guarantees income security for everyone once they reach old age.

Indeed, enlightened pension specialists understand that universal pension schemes – when funded from general government revenues – are, in fact, best understood as contributory, rather than non-contributory, schemes. Such schemes – which are very

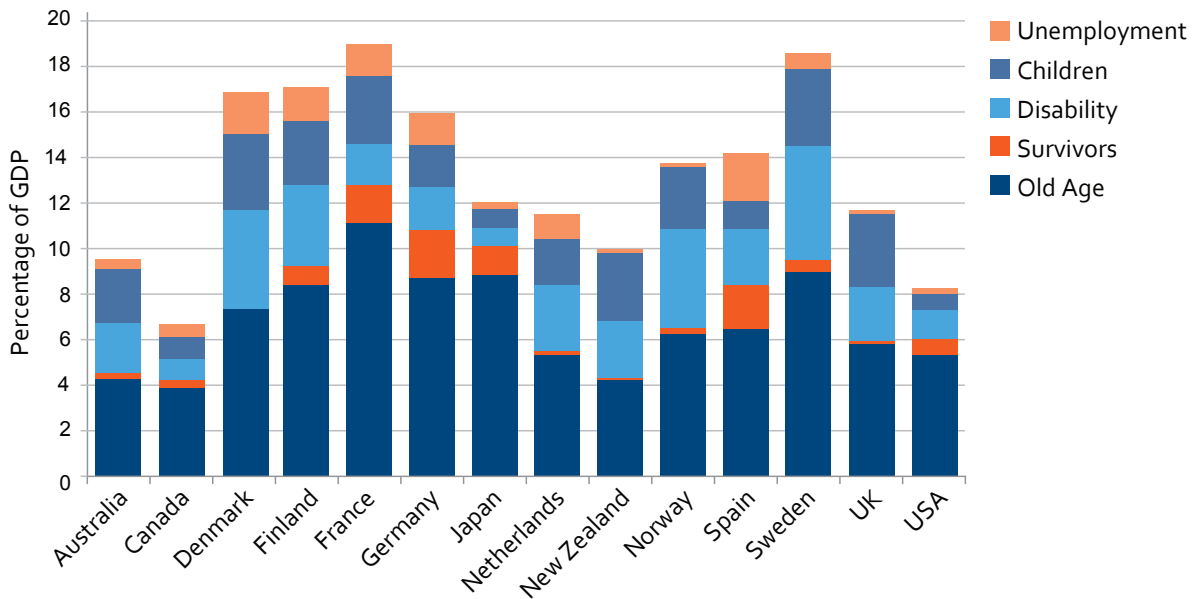
common in both developed and developing countries – are usually regarded as entitlements and are provided to older people in recognition of their contribution to the state during their working lives. This contribution includes the taxes they have paid, which – in many cases – are indirect taxes such as VAT or customs taxes. In fact, universal tax-financed pensions could be regarded as efficient forms of pay-as-you-go pensions: people pay taxes during their working lives to fund current pensions and, once they become pensioners, their own pensions are funded by the taxes of those who are then of working age.

It really makes little sense to see entitlement schemes – such as old age or disability pensions – as “targeting” methodologies. Indeed, many advocates of poor relief agree with this: for example, Grosh and Leite (2009) made a strong case against using pensions as a means of targeting the poor in general, arguing that a household-based poor relief scheme would be more effective.

In reality, what is often understood as “categorical targeting” is a policy choice rather than a “targeting” methodology. Countries choose, for example, to establish social security schemes for the elderly, people with disabilities or children because they are concerned about meeting the needs of these specific populations. This does not mean that they do not want to support the general population but they tend to do so by, over decades, progressively building comprehensive social security systems that offer benefits to a range of specific categories of the population,

which correspond to stages and risks associated with the lifecycle. Figure 1 demonstrates the mix of spending on social security in a selection of developed countries. All these countries use categories of the population to shape their social security systems, with the main categories being the elderly, people with disabilities, children, survivors and the unemployed. Programmes targeted at the poor in general – commonly known as poor relief – are usually tiny in countries with mature social security systems.

Figure 1: Spending on social security in developed countries – in 2008 – by categories of the population²



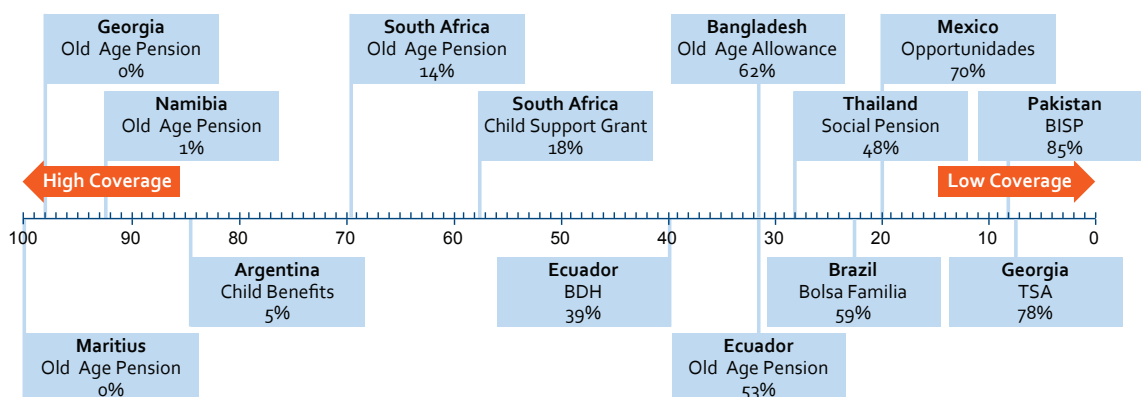
Distinguishing Coverage from "Targeting"

The other area of confusion in debates on "targeting" is the distinction between coverage and the selection process itself. Both evidence and simple mathematics indicate that the key factor determining the effectiveness of a scheme in reaching poor eligible recipients is coverage rather than the "targeting" methodology.

Figure 2 illustrates the importance of coverage by mapping a range of social security schemes along

a scale indicating the coverage of the intended category of recipients. On the right hand side of the scale, zero indicates no coverage while, on the left, 100 indicates universal coverage. The number within the boxes indicates the proportion of the poorest 20% of the selected category – used here as a proxy for the extreme poor – who are excluded from the scheme.

Figure 2: Relationship between coverage and effectiveness of a sample of social security schemes, measured as a percentage of the poorest 20% of the selected category of recipients who are excluded³



² Source: OECD Social Expenditure Database.

³ Data on coverage and the exclusion of the poorest are taken from the following sources: Fiszbein and Schady (2009), Jitsuchon *et al* (2012), Kidd and Khondker (2013), Lucio Romero (2011), Mete (2011), Roca (2011), Samson *et al* (2007), SASSA (2012), UNICEF (2012), Veras *et al* (2007), Willmore (2003; 2007) and World Bank (2009). A few of the examples given - such as the Namibian Old Age Pension, South African Child Support Grant and Argentina's child grants – provide the author's estimates of the exclusion of the poorest 20% and should be regarded as a ballpark figures.

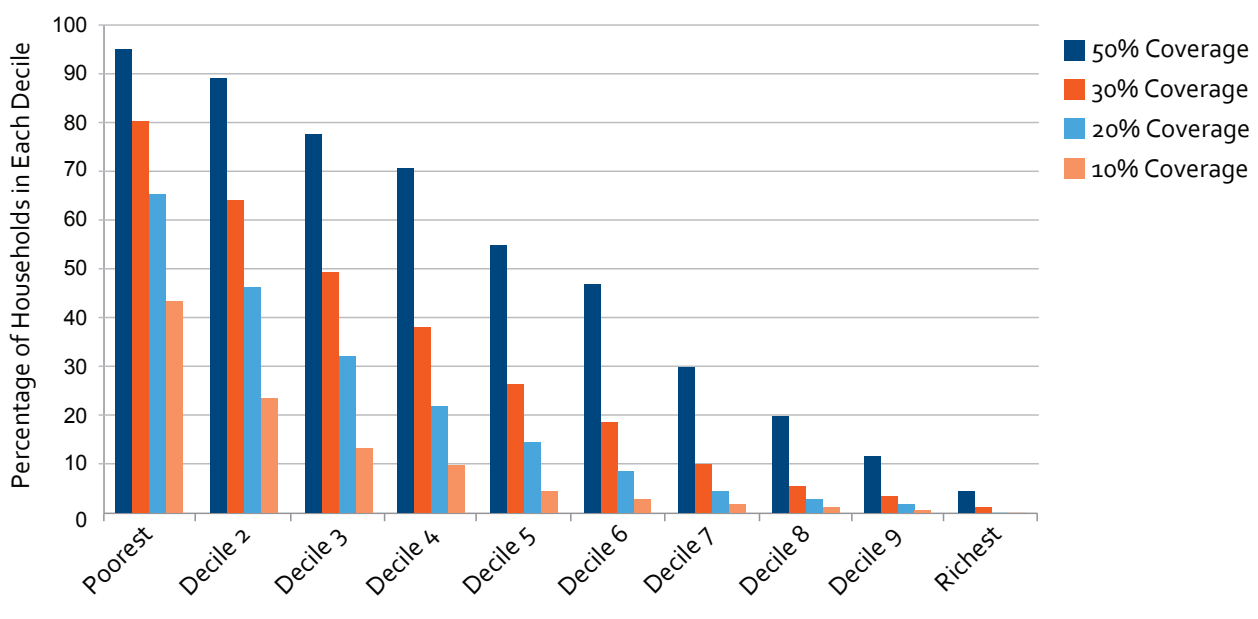
The diagram demonstrates that the higher the coverage, the greater the inclusion of the poor in a scheme (which, as argued above, should be the key indicator of a scheme’s effectiveness). So, for example, the universal Old Age Pension in Mauritius covers 100% of the intended recipients – i.e. all those over 60 years – and, logically, all of the poorest older people. In contrast, Brazil’s *Bolsa Familia* programme covers just over 20% of the population but excludes nearly two-thirds of the extreme poor. Schemes with intermediate coverage – such as Ecuador’s *Bono de Desarrollo Humano*, which covers around 40% of the population – tend to achieve intermediate coverage of the poorest (in this case, around 39% are excluded).

There are two main explanations for the increase in the exclusion of the poorest as coverage decreases. The first is that some schemes have such low coverage that it is impossible for them to reach the poorest 20% of the population. So, for example, Pakistan’s Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) covered only 8% of the population in 2011 so, necessarily, the majority of the poorest 20% were excluded.

The other reason for the exclusion of the poorest is the inherent inaccuracy of poverty-based selection methodologies in developing countries. There is no selection methodology that can accurately identify the poor. Even well known schemes using poverty-based selection have very high exclusion errors: Mexico’s *Oportunidades* excludes 70% of the poorest 20% of eligible households (Veras *et al* 2007) while Georgia’s Targeted Social Assistance (TSA) programme – which is described by the World Bank (2009) as “among the best-performing similar programs in the world” – still excludes 46% of the poorest 10% of the population (UNICEF 2012).

Simulations of the proxy means test “targeting” methodology help explain the increasing exclusion of the poorest as coverage reduces. Figure 3 indicates, for Bangladesh, the proportion within each wealth decile of the population that would be reached by a programme using the proxy means test, at different levels of coverage.⁴ While a programme covering 50% of the population would – in theory – reach almost 95% of the poorest decile, as coverage reduces the inclusion of those in the poorest decile also falls. So, with coverage of 10%, 56% of the poorest decile would be excluded from the programme.⁵

Figure 3: Proportion of each wealth decile of the population reached by a programme in Bangladesh using a proxy means test, at different coverage levels⁶



⁴ The simulations assume perfect implementation and, therefore, produce results that exaggerate the accuracy of the proxy means test.

⁵ See Kidd and Wylde (2011) for an in-depth explanation of how the proxy means test functions.

⁶ Analysis was undertaken by Bazlul Khondker for AusAID in 2013. For further results, see Kidd and Khondker (2013).

Coverage is, therefore, clearly more important than the “accuracy” of a particular selection methodology in determining the success of public services in reaching the poorest. Given the inadequacies of poverty-based selection methodologies, the only reliable means of increasing the inclusion of the poor in social security schemes – and other public services – is to broaden coverage.

However, the level of coverage of a scheme depends, largely, on the ideology of governments. Neoliberal governments – which, naturally,

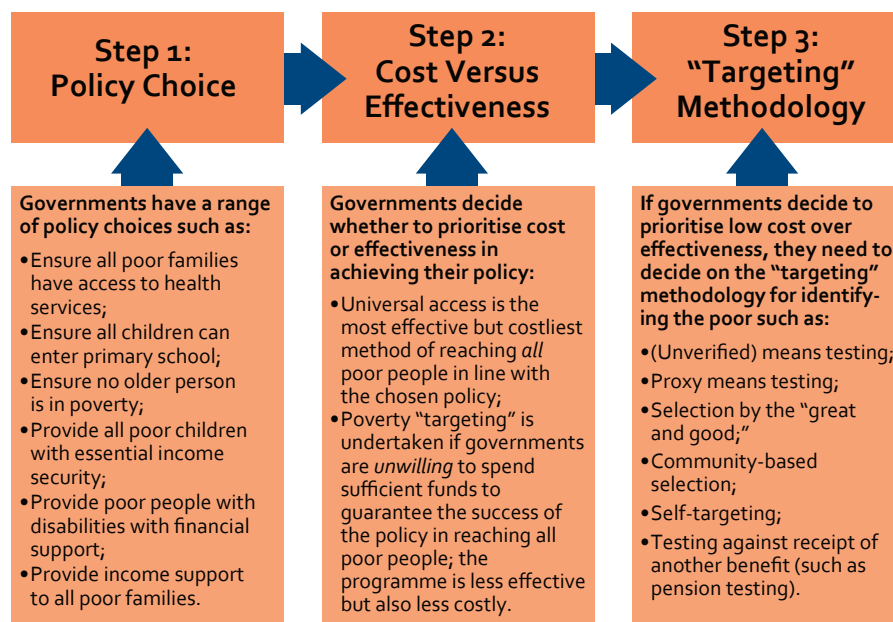
prioritise low taxes – are usually reluctant to promote schemes with high coverage since this implies greater spending and higher taxes. They are much happier with a form of Tea Party Social Security that saves money by directing resources at the extreme poor. In contrast, governments that embrace *inclusive* social policies are much more willing to broaden coverage, despite the need for higher taxes. As Figure 2 indicated, the benefit of this higher spending is that these inclusive schemes are significantly more effective in providing the poorest with access to public services.

The Real Process of Selecting Recipients of Public Services

From the discussion above, we can conclude that the process commonly known as “targeting” is, in fact, more complex than usually described and intimately embedded within higher-level policy processes and ideological debates. As a result, it is best to conceive of the process of selecting recipients within a broader context that

encompasses both policy decision-making and the design of specific schemes. Therefore, the process leading to the selection of recipients can be understood as incorporating three key steps, as set out in Figure 4. Each of these steps is explained in more detail in the sections below.

Figure 4: A representation of the real process of selection of recipients



Step 1: Governments identify the policy they want to pursue.

The first stage of the process to select recipients of public services is the identification of a particular policy by governments. And, of course, there are myriad policies from which governments can choose. For example, within the social security sector, policies could include: providing all poor families with a regular cash transfer; ensuring all

poor children can access a cash grant; or offering income security to poor older people and/or people with disabilities; etc. Other examples are given in Figure 4.

As explained earlier, most countries develop social security systems that follow a lifecycle approach. In other words, they establish social security schemes

that address challenges associated with particular stages of the lifecycle – such as childhood, old age, widowhood or unemployment – or risks that can occur across the lifecycle, such as disability. These decisions to direct resources to particular stages of the lifecycle are – in reality – major policy initiatives rather than “targeting” methodologies.

However, not all countries follow a lifecycle approach: some decide to provide social transfers

to the poor in general, in other words poor relief. This was a common approach to social security in the 19th Century and has been adopted by some developing countries, such as Mexico, the Philippines and Pakistan. A decision to provide transfers to poor households in general effectively pre-determines the choice in Step 2 since no country has ever provided poor relief on a universal basis.

Step 2: Governments decide whether to prioritise cost or effectiveness.

Once a policy is agreed upon, governments then have to decide whether to prioritise cost or effectiveness in the design of the scheme. As indicated earlier, higher coverage – and, therefore, higher cost – is likely to result in a more effective scheme, when assessed in terms of the success in including the poor. So, given that a universal scheme is most effective in including the poor of a particular category, governments that prioritise effectiveness over cost – and are willing pay the price (and tax accordingly) – adopt this *inclusive* approach. So, for example, universal pensions are increasingly common in developing countries as a means of guaranteeing income security for poor older people. Nonetheless, many countries decide to restrict their pension schemes to the poor, thereby enabling them to reduce costs and taxes. But such countries consequently are disadvantaged by having a scheme that misses large numbers – often the majority – of poor older people.

In reality, few developing countries provide transfers on a universal basis to all children since, given the high numbers of children, this will translate into a high cost. However, some countries are beginning to move towards higher coverage of child-focused schemes as a means of increasing their effectiveness in reaching children, in effect the *progressive realisation* of an entitlement to the right to social security that is set out in the Convention of the Rights of the Child. Argentina now provides child benefits that reach 85% of children, Brazil reaches 63%, while South Africa reaches 58%: this higher coverage significantly increases the effectiveness of the schemes in reaching poor children.⁷ There are growing calls for Brazil to provide universal access to its child transfers, in the face of evidence that

this will increase the impact of *Bolsa Familia* and the country's other child transfers, even with no increase in budgets.⁸

As noted earlier, if governments have made the policy choice to provide cash transfers to the poor in general – in other words household based poor relief – they almost always decide to prioritise low cost over effectiveness. Such schemes tend to have small budgets – the largest are around 0.4% of GDP, which is very small compared to many lifecycle schemes with universal access – and they necessarily exclude a high proportion of the poor. Many also have conditions attached that force the poor to comply with certain behaviours, as found in schemes such as workfare and conditional cash transfers. There have, though, been proposals – in particular in southern Africa – to provide every individual in the country with a Basic Income Grant, which is, in effect, a universal household grant. Due to cost considerations, these proposals have not been adopted, except in a small pilot in Namibia.⁹

In other public services, establishing universal access for all households is common. Many health systems provide free access for all – i.e. universal health coverage – while, in education, it is common for countries to establish universal free primary education. So, for example, the UK's National Health Service is a policy choice to provide universal health access and has been a particularly effective means of including the poor in health service provision. Nonetheless, as with pensions, some governments decide to reduce costs – and taxes – by deciding to select only the poor to benefit from free health and education, thereby necessarily reducing the access of the poor to these services.

⁷ Brazil and Argentina achieve their high coverage via multiple child-focused schemes. See Kidd and Huda (2013), Roca (2011) and Soares *et al* (2012).

⁸ Kidd and Huda (2013) and Soares *et al* (2012).

⁹ Source: Haarmen *et al* (2008).

If countries decide to provide universal access to a scheme, it is not necessary to move to Stage 3. The identification process is very simple: in the case of a universal child benefit, for example, everyone below a specific age is selected; or, in the case of universal primary education, all children wanting to enter school are able to do so without paying any fees. Such schemes can move straight to a registration process in which all those eligible

for the scheme are able to apply and prove their eligibility against very simple criteria (such as age). These schemes have much lower administrative costs since the selection process is very simple. It is only those programmes that decide to select “the poor” that need to move to Step 3 (although, as Box 4 indicates, “the poor” is a relatively arbitrary construct).

Box 4: Poverty is a relatively arbitrary concept

It needs to be borne in mind that “poor” is a very flexible category. Poverty lines are inherently political; and countries may decide to have a high poverty line and accept a high poverty rate while other countries may choose lower poverty lines. So, while Indonesia has a poverty rate of only 12%, South Africa – a richer country – uses a much higher poverty

line that delivers a poverty rate of 52%¹⁰ (Statistics South Africa 2012).

Therefore, when countries decide to include the “the poor” within a programme, the proportion of the particular category of the population that is referred to could vary enormously.

Step 3: Designing a methodology to identify – or “target” – “the poor”

As we have seen, during Step 2, many countries make the decision to reduce costs – and taxes – by restricting access to public services to the poor, despite this reducing their effectiveness in including the poor. They therefore need to choose a methodology for selecting – or identifying – the poor. There is a range of options for identifying the poor that are currently in operation in developing countries. The most common are:¹¹

- **Means testing** – often unverified, as in Brazil and South Africa – where potential recipients simply make an unsubstantiated declaration of their income.
- **Proxy means testing (PMT)**, where multiple proxies – or assets – are selected that have some degree of correlation with income and households are scored against these proxies (see Kidd and Wylde 2011). This is a common selection mechanism but functions very much as a form of lottery in which the poor have more lottery tickets than the better-off.¹² National poor relief

programmes using the PMT methodology include Oportunidades in Mexico, Pantawad Pamilya in the Philippines, and BISP in Pakistan.

- **Community based “targeting,”** where whole communities select the recipients.¹³ This is rarely used at a national scale since it is very difficult to implement effectively. However, Rwanda’s VUP programme is one example.
- **Administrative targeting**, where government officials use their judgement to identify recipients, often on the basis of guidance provided by central government. Examples include Fiji’s Family Assistance Programme (FAP) and Uzbekistan’s Family Allowances.¹⁴
- **Self-targeting**, which can be used on schemes such as workfare. Wage rates are low so that only those desperate for work – theoretically the poor – apply for employment. McCord (2005) provides a good explanation of the challenges with this form of selection.

¹⁰ In fact, multiple poverty lines are used in South Africa, with some giving lower poverty rates (Statistics South Africa 2012). However, the key point is that “the poor” is a relatively arbitrary concept.

¹¹ There are, of course, other methodologies that are used as a means of selecting “the poor.” For example, many tax-financed pension schemes use “pensions-testing” which means that if beneficiaries have a pension already, they cannot have another one (as happens in Lesotho, Nepal and Thailand, for example).

¹² I would like to thank Nick Freeland for this very helpful analogy.

¹³ In reality, there are two very different approaches to community based selection (or targeting). One is selection by community members while the other is by community elites and could be referred to as selection by the “Great and Good.”

¹⁴ In Uzbekistan, selection is by leaders of a traditional local organization – the Mahalla – so, in theory, could be regarded as “Great and Good” targeting. However, the Mahallas are being given increasing responsibilities by government so their leadership could be regarded as government officials.

One feature that all these methodologies have in common is high levels of inaccuracy, with inaccuracy increasing as coverage decreases.¹⁵ Indeed, given that they frequently miss the “target,” it is often better to view these methodologies as “rationing mechanisms” rather than “targeting mechanisms.” By using these methodologies, countries have to pay the price of

the exclusion of a high proportion of poor people from within the eligible population. Indeed, when deciding on a selection methodology to use in Step 3, it is probably best not to choose on the basis of relative accuracy, but on other factors such as the extent to which a selection methodology damages community cohesion, the likelihood of results being manipulated, and the cost of implementation.¹⁶

Box 5: Should governments “target” the poor to increase the value of the transfers received by the poor?

It is often claimed that one reason for governments targeting the poor is because there is a fixed budget and, by sharing the budget out among a smaller number, the poor will get higher transfers. A classic example of this argument has been presented by Devereux (2009) who claimed: “A given resource envelope will have five times more impact on poverty if it is disbursed to the poorest 20% than if it is thinly spread over an entire population.”

However, Pritchett (2005) – in a World Bank paper – explains that there is no such thing as a given resource envelope in national policy (although there may be in donor-funded programmes). Governments can always invest more in public services if they wish, and are likely to do so if schemes are universal (see the Conclusion for an explanation). The sad reality is that, once programmes are targeted at the poor, they often shrink in size (World Bank 1990). Commonly, schemes for the poor provide smaller transfers than universal schemes.

As Figure 2 indicates, some countries – such as South Africa – adopt a compromise approach, using high but not universal coverage. In effect, they use a form of “affluence testing,” which attempts to exclude the rich, rather than identifying the poor

for inclusion. In schemes using affluence testing to achieve high coverage, they are usually pretty effective in including the poorest, although there are always some who miss out.

Box 6: The importance of an evidence-based approach to selection processes

When deciding between different selection methodologies, it is important that technical advisers are entirely honest with policymakers. I have seen many examples of “smoke and mirrors” being used to make different “targeting” methods look better than they are and even some blatantly false claims (I once got into a public argument with a “social protection specialist” of a well known institution who claimed that the proxy means test had errors of only 6% and that they should choose his institution to help design this wonderfully accurate

selection methodology!). In a separate paper – ([click here to view](#)) Kidd (2012) – I have also described how a World Bank paper used poor quality analysis to exaggerate the benefits of poverty “targeting.”

Policy makers need to be fully apprised of the challenges they face when they choose a particular selection methodology, as none in use in developing countries are anywhere near perfect. They should not be fooled into thinking that they can have an effective selection process without sufficient investment to ensure broad coverage.

¹⁵ See Kidd et al. (2011) and Freeland (2012).

¹⁶ See Kidd et al (2011) for a discussion of the broader challenges associated with methodologies used to identify the poor.

Conclusion

While discussions on “targeting” often appear to be technical they are, in reality, highly ideological. So, governments committed to the aim of reaching the poor are more likely to establish *inclusive* public services – implying high coverage – and finance them via higher taxes. In contrast, more neoliberal governments that prioritise low taxes are more likely to establish *poor relief* schemes, so that they can save money. In the end, all governments make a choice between cost and effectiveness: the only schemes that are truly effective at “targeting” are those that are universal but they come at a high cost.

However, concerns about the cost of inclusive schemes need to be tempered by the realisation that the nature of the selection process does, itself, influence government commitment to fund public services. As the World Bank (1991) and Pritchett (2005) explain, schemes with high coverage – and which thus include the middle class and rich – are more likely to receive political support and, as a result, higher levels of funding. The middle class and rich – who are likely to be the main taxpayers – are more likely to lobby for higher spending and accept higher taxes if they also benefit. In contrast, schemes for the poor that exclude those in the middle are unlikely to receive the support of the main taxpayers – who are also more politically influential – and will, as a result, have low budgets.

So, while many universal old age pensions in developing countries have budgets in excess of 1% of GDP, even the largest poor relief programmes – such as *Bolsa Familia* and *Oportunidades* – have budgets that are no more than 0.4% of GDP.

Only when governments decide to reduce coverage by selecting only the poor is it necessary to determine which selection methodology is appropriate. Each methodology has its fans: Brazilians and South Africans love means testing, the World Bank is a big advocate of the proxy means test, and there are growing calls for community-based targeting. However, they all have low accuracy in common, which is unsurprising given that any methodology that attempts to “target” the poor is – as a result of the volatility of incomes – effectively trying to hit a moving target, in particular in the subsistence and informal sectors.

The one certainty is that, if governments want to include all the poor in a social security scheme or ensure full access for all to public services, they need to be willing to tax at a rate that is sufficient to fund an effective scheme. It is unrealistic to expect that a good selection process can be achieved on a low budget. As Sen (1995) noted: “Benefits meant exclusively for the poor often end up being poor benefits.” But, they do come with the Tea Party’s endorsement.

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This series of papers provides people with the opportunity to comment on key issues in international development with the aim of stimulating debate. While Development Pathways may not necessarily agree with the opinions of the author, we believe it is important to give people space to express their views.

About Development Pathways

We are a group of international development practitioners who specialise in the fields of social protection and social development and work with a range of development organisations and country governments across the developing world. We are committed to bold and innovative thinking and our aim is to provide creative and context-specific solutions to the social and economic policy challenges facing developing countries.

We believe that policy and programming needs to be evidence-based and uniquely appropriate for the political realities of the countries in which we work, which may mean challenging prevailing orthodoxy to deliver the best policy and programme solutions. All of our work is grounded in social and political analysis, ensuring that policies and programmes promote gender equity and women's empowerment, and benefit the most vulnerable.

About The Author

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Dr. Stephen Kidd is a Senior Social Policy Specialist at Development Pathways: he wonders whether advocates of targeting conceive of universal access as some form of blanket bombing.

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