INTRODUCTION
One of the core challenges in operationalizing effective poverty reduction programming is ensuring that investments reach the intended populations. Targeting is the mechanism that is used for “identifying households or individuals who are defined as eligible for resource transfers and simultaneously screening out those who are defined as ineligible” (Sabates-Wheeler, Hurrell and Devereux, 2015). Widely used targeting methods include proxy means testing (PMT), geographical and categorical targeting, community-based targeting (CBT) and hybrid combinations of these methods (for a summary of the main methods, see Box 1). Although the motivation for selecting a particular targeting method varies, the choice will typically depend on a programme’s objectives, while being constrained by the trade-off between the accuracy and costs associated with each method.

Academics and practitioners are still debating the superiority – in terms of accuracy and costs – of CBT and PMT, two of the most commonly used targeting methods in sub-Saharan Africa. The few studies that directly compare the two methods find that neither one clearly outperforms the other in terms of accuracy, or that PMT performs only slightly better than CBT (Alatas et al., 2012; Karlan and Thuysbaert, 2013; Pop, 2015; Stoeffler, Mills and del Ninno, 2016). Targeting based on community knowledge, however, typically results in higher levels of satisfaction and greater perceived legitimacy of the process among recipients (Alatas et al., 2012; Pop, 2015). The evidence surrounding the performance of CBT is mixed. On the one hand, studies focusing on CBT highlight the risks of ‘elite capture’, rent-seeking behaviour and patronage from local leaders; on the other hand, they point to the potential benefits associated with local agents having better knowledge of the community, the fostering of greater community ownership and satisfaction, and the flexibility of being able to customize to the local context the criteria used to identify the poor (Alatas et al., 2012; Conning and Kevane, 2002).

TARGETING OF SOCIAL PROTECTION IN ETHIOPIA
Targeting in Ethiopia has received substantial attention since the country is one of the largest recipients globally of donor funds for development and emergency interventions. Several studies examining the country’s early social protection programmes have revealed targeting biases in regard to demography, geography and political affiliations (Broussard, Dercon and Somanathan, 2014; Jayne et al., 2002).
With Ethiopia's launch in 2005 of the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), a major social protection programme aimed at addressing chronic food insecurity among the most vulnerable households, several administrative guidelines were introduced to improve targeting. This case study summarizes evidence from the last two rounds of the Ethiopian Rural Household Survey to investigate whether PSNP implementation resulted in changes in targeting determinants for public works and emergency aid between 2004 to 2009 in 11 rural villages. In particular, the study aimed to assess whether political connections still played a role in determining the receipt of social protection support and if this changed over time with the implementation of the transparency measures.

At its peak in 2010, PSNP reached over 7.9 million people – about 10 per cent of the national population – spread across more than 40 per cent of country's woredas (districts) (World Bank, 2016). The programme's stated objective is to reduce poverty by assuring food consumption and preventing asset depletion for chronically food insecure households, while stimulating markets, improving services and rehabilitating natural resources (Ethiopian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2006).

PSNP builds on previous aid interventions in terms of its structure, distribution modalities and intervention typologies. The main two PSNP interventions are public works, which supports ultra-poor households by providing work on community projects, and direct support, which targets labour-constrained households (payment for both interventions is in cash or food provision). Emergency aid remains in place but only as an intervention during times of crisis such as drought or flooding, which occur frequently in Ethiopia.

The steps for determining eligibility for support combine two targeting methods: geographical targeting and CBT. Following Ethiopia's federal administrative structure, the central government and the regions first select the woredas to receive support and assign to each an amount to be disbursed. Individual beneficiary households are then selected at the lowest administrative level, by kebele (community) committees comprising local administrators and community representatives. As the official guidelines for identifying beneficiaries allow some leeway for local interpretation in how chronically food insecure households are selected, it is possible that political connections could influence selection. For example, political connections could improve information flows between households and selection committees, enabling a household to both better signal its needs and receive more accurate information on available support. These mechanisms cannot, however, be easily distinguished from more problematic issues such as favouritism and elite capture of benefits.

Since PSNP was launched, additional procedures have been introduced to improve targeting accuracy (i.e. by minimizing inclusion and exclusion errors) and to increase transparency and community acceptance. For instance, an independent body was established to address grievances and appeals; the proposed list of beneficiaries now had to be approved in a community meeting and then displayed in public; and client cards were introduced to improve the security of transfers and to avoid fraud.

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1 This analysis focuses on the public works component of PSNP only.

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**Box 1. Social protection targeting methods**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Means testing</td>
<td>Based on an assessment of income, assets and/or wealth of applicants (including unverified means testing).</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Proxy means testing (PMT)</td>
<td>Based on a weighted combination of characteristics that are believed to correlate highly with well-being or deprivation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Categorical targeting</td>
<td>Based on characteristics of interest to policymakers (e.g. female head of household, disability status), which may or may not correlate with well-being or deprivation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Geographical targeting</td>
<td>Based on location and/or residence (e.g. an area affected by a hazard, a district with a high prevalence of poverty).</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Community-based targeting (CBT)</td>
<td>Based on an eligibility assessment performed by the community in which a programme is implemented.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 Self-targeting</td>
<td>Based on voluntary participation and/or self-selection.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 Multiple mechanisms</td>
<td>Where more than one mechanism is used to identify programme participants, either simultaneously, sequentially or in parallel.</td>
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Source: Devereux et al. (2017).
DATA AND METHODOLOGY
The study uses the last two rounds (2004 and 2009) of the Ethiopian Rural Household Survey—a panel data set collected in 15 rural villages across different agro-ecological regions—and the analysis is restricted to the 11 villages that received social protection support in either survey year. The probability of benefiting from social protection (modelled as a function of observable household background characteristics) is estimated separately for public works and for emergency aid pooled across the two years. The covariates were selected following the official PSNP guidelines and the variables reported by village officials as the most important factors expected to play a role in the aid distribution process. To examine the effect of political connections, the model includes an indicator for whether a household reported having a relative or friend who holds an official position in the kebele (or elsewhere). A fully interacted model controlling for all covariates and a time trend was used to compare targeting determinants over time, with a focus on three main variables that capture food insecurity, poverty and political connections. Further details of the methodology can be found in the full paper.

RESULTS
The results around targeting determinants for 2004 are fairly consistent with studies focusing on interventions prior to PSNP that found political connections were particularly important in determining the selection of beneficiaries for both public works and emergency aid (Broussard et al., 2014; Caeyers and Dercon, 2012). However, the findings suggest an overall improvement in targeting by 2009, especially for public works, the major component of PSNP. For example, higher wealth (proxied by livestock holdings) in 2009 has a strong negative association with participation in public works. In addition, political connections correlate positively with public works participation in 2004, but no longer appear to play a role by 2009. For emergency aid receipt, the same encouraging dynamic is observed—with political connections no longer predicting receipt of aid in 2009. Additional indicators related to household demographics (share of elderly members, work inability of the head of household) are also no longer significant in predicting receipt of emergency aid, suggesting that labour-constrained households were no longer prioritized as beneficiaries in 2009 (though they did receive larger amounts of aid in both survey years). This is in line with the purpose of emergency aid that targets drought-affected areas and which has no additional programme component requiring labour to be provided in return.

The finding for emergency aid is sensitive to the sample analysed. For example, demographics are again significant when restricting the sample to villages targeted by both public works and emergency aid. This could indicate that in PSNP operational communities, the additional resources provided by emergency aid in response to weather shocks prioritize those households that face labour constraints. This may reflect improved targeting, as public works are already being directed to vulnerable households whose members are able to work. In both cases, recent shocks do not predict receipt of aid, indicating that the annual re-targeting is not sufficiently responsive to the incidence of shocks.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICYMAKING
There is no ‘one size fits all’ targeting methodology. However, debates around the merits and drawbacks of PMT versus CBT are increasingly common, particularly in resource-poor settings like Ethiopia. While encouraging, this case study cannot directly attribute the reduced role of political connections in targeting to specific implementation measures. However, it is plausible that such measures were a contributing factor. This suggests that it is worthwhile investing in transparency measures as part of social protection programming, although the specific programmatic components employed are likely to vary by setting. In addition, as social protection is increasingly used to mitigate the negative effects of shocks, careful planning to increase the agility and responsiveness of social protection systems could improve targeting for short-term needs. Further rigorous research on targeting should be integrated into ongoing evaluations and the scaling up of social protection in African countries, and seek to disentangle the relative benefits of different combinations of methods and hybrid approaches to targeting.
REFERENCES


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