

Evaluating Outside the Box: Mixing Methods in Analysing Social Protection Programmes

Abstract This CDI Practice Paper by Keetie Roelen and Stephen Devereux¹ reflects on the methodological implications of operationalising an expanded framework for evaluating social protection programmes. It builds on an *IDS Working Paper* (Devereux *et al.* 2013) that critiques mainstream approaches to impact evaluations and proposes an alternative framework that (1) assesses a broader range of impacts, and (2) uses a broader range of methods in a more holistic way. This paper specifically discusses the combination and integration of methods as part of the expanded evaluation framework, and does so by using an ongoing evaluation of a cash transfer pilot programme in Tigray, Ethiopia as a case study.

This paper is structured as follows: firstly, we motivate and summarise the expanded evaluation framework, highlighting three aspects that are deemed to be largely absent from standard evaluation frameworks, and introduce its methodological implications. In Section 2, we describe the use of mixed methods in the case study from Tigray to investigate the alternative framework's three new aspects. Section 3 reflects on the mixing of methods in light of the alternative evaluation framework. The conclusion provides lessons learned and presents key operational principles for evaluating social protection programmes.

1 Proposed new evaluation framework

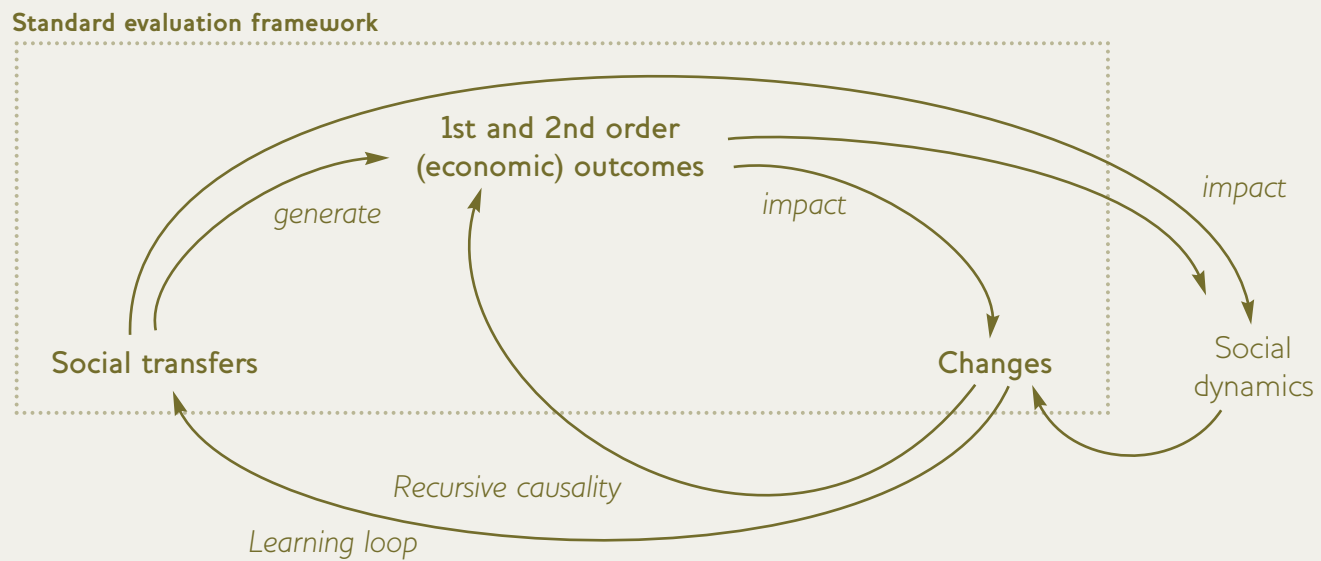
Most evaluations of social protection programmes have two limitations, which are arguably a side-effect of the trend towards making the monitoring and evaluation of development programmes more 'rigorous' and 'scientific'. Firstly, they measure a **limited set of outcomes** – typically poverty, income, assets, food security, education and health – that are positive and can be quantified in terms of measurable changes over time. Secondly, they use a **limited range of methods** – with a bias towards large-scale household surveys administered before and after a programme is introduced, to beneficiaries and a control group, to measure statistically significant differences that can be attributed to the programme. These two factors are interrelated and mutually reinforcing: the outcomes

that are tracked over time lead towards the selection of a certain toolkit of methods, but not others, while these methods are designed to measure a certain set of outcomes, but not others. As will be shown below, these omissions can lead to serious misinterpretation of evaluation findings.

By favouring quantitative methods and quantifiable outcomes, most evaluations exclude social impacts, and draw on qualitative methods only to provide quotes and case studies to endorse and give texture to the quantitative findings. The alternative framework proposed in Devereux *et al.* (2013) argues that impact evaluations should be extended in three innovative ways.

The first innovation is to recognise that **intervention design choices and implementation processes** can directly affect programme outcomes. For example, how cash transfers are spent, and their impact on key outcomes such as children's nutrition, can be substantially different depending on whether the cash is delivered to a male household head or a woman in the same household, because of gendered differences in spending priorities. Similarly, delivering cash transfers through electronic mechanisms such as mobile phones or smart-cards is more efficient, more secure, and gives beneficiaries more flexibility and access to savings facilities than manual cash transfer delivery. So switching from manual to electronic delivery systems can be

Figure 1 Alternative evaluation framework



Source: Devereux *et al.* (2013: 14).

associated with higher proportions of cash transfers being saved. These factors – changes in efficiency, security, flexibility and savings behaviour – are not usually considered in evaluations that examine the impact of cash transfers purely as incremental household income.

The second extension to standard evaluation approaches is to incorporate **unintended impacts** of programmes, both positive (e.g. empowerment of women) and negative (e.g. beneficiaries being stigmatised), as well as their effects on social relations, between individuals within households and between households within communities. While it is increasingly recognised that social protection programmes have social impacts, these are rarely assessed in randomised control trials (RCTs) or quasi-experimental evaluations because they are difficult to quantify. This is important because, for example, if beneficiaries lose access to informal support from their communities after they register for a cash transfer programme, this could effectively reduce the net benefits they receive. Only by jointly assessing the direct ‘economic’ and indirect ‘social’ impacts of these programmes can their full economic and social impacts be understood.

The third proposed innovation is to incorporate **two feedback loops** into the evaluation framework (see Figure 1). The first loop – ‘recursive causality’ – recognises that programmes have multiple impacts and that one impact can either reinforce or undermine others, sometimes simultaneously and sometimes sequentially. For example, if a cash transfer is spent on food this has an immediate but temporary direct impact on household food security. Alternatively, if the cash is spent on health care there is no immediate impact on food security, but if the beneficiary’s improved health translates into improved

productivity they could produce more food or earn more income, and there might be a substantial, sustained positive impact on household food security in the future. Most evaluations focus on short- to medium-term changes in key indicators and are not able to assess impacts that occur over the long term.

The second feedback loop is the ‘deliberate learning’ loop, whereby results from the monitoring and evaluation are systematically fed back into improved design and delivery of the programme. The Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) in Ethiopia offers a relevant example. PSNP beneficiaries were paid in either food or cash, but inflation – partly caused by the injection of cash transfers into weak rural markets – eroded the purchasing power of cash, so beneficiary preferences shifted against cash. Since this aspect was being investigated in ongoing evaluation rounds, this information could be used to change the payment modality, and more than a million beneficiaries switched from being paid in cash to being paid with food (Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux 2010).

Figure 1 illustrates both the ‘standard’ evaluation framework and the expanded ‘alternative’ approach. In the ‘standard’ approach, social transfers are expected to generate specific positive economic outcomes (such as higher income and consumption), which translate into other positive attributable changes (in nutrition status, school enrolment, etc.) – the standard impact indicators reported in evaluation reports. The ‘alternative’ approach incorporates this theory of change but builds on it by asserting that social transfers also have impacts on social dynamics (through how they are targeted or delivered), which can reinforce or compromise the desired changes. This expanded framework also recognises that economic

Box 1 Case study – Social Cash Transfer Pilot Programme (SCTPP), Tigray, Ethiopia

The SCTPP has three overarching objectives: (1) to reduce poverty, hunger and starvation in all households that are extremely poor and at the same time labour constrained; (2) to increase access to basic social welfare services such as health care and education; and (3) to generate information on the feasibility, cost-effectiveness and impact of a social cash transfer scheme administered by the local administration.

- Pilot programme running for a fixed period of two years
- 2,300 participants
- Monthly cash transfer
- Minimum payment 155 Birr (US\$8)
- Targeted to ultra-poor and labour-constrained households
- Quota on number of eligible households to be included due to budget constraints
- Community-based targeting
- Physical payments at pay-point by microcredit institution (DECSI)
- Provision of complementary services
- Run by Regional Government of Tigray, with support from UNICEF
- Implemented at community level by Community Care Coalitions (CCCs), formed by community volunteers.

Source: Berhane *et al.* (2012a, b).

outcomes induced by social transfers can have knock-on effects on social dynamics (e.g. by generating resentment by non-beneficiaries towards beneficiaries, which might undermine informal social support systems).

Figure 1 shows how programme processes underlie all of these dynamics. They can reinforce or compromise the extent to which transfers generate economic effects (if targeting is inaccurate, for instance, effects on poverty will be small) and they might have unpredictable impacts on social dynamics (for instance, community-based targeting may strengthen community solidarity or it may cause tensions within the community).

The expanded evaluation framework therefore asserts that any programme's achievement of desired positive impacts is mediated and often compromised by programme design and implementation processes and by social dynamics – two sets of causal factors that are inadequately recognised

by programme implementers and rarely considered in impact evaluations. Serious consequences can follow from these oversights. Failing to recognise how the design and delivery of a programme can affect its outcomes means that opportunities to enhance impacts could be missed or, even worse, that an intervention is judged to have failed when a simple change (such as delivering resources to women instead of men) could transform 'failure' into success. Similarly, failing to take social impacts into account risks overlooking important positive or negative impacts of an intervention. A programme that achieves its poverty reduction targets could be damaging to community cohesion, for example, while a programme that does not perform well in terms of economic indicators in the short term might empower women in ways that are important for overall economic and social wellbeing in the long term. A 'learning loop' allows programmes to be modified to reflect the important insights that a more holistic monitoring and evaluation framework will generate.

So the expanded or alternative framework has important implications for impact evaluations. First, it implies that a broader range of impacts needs to be assessed, especially social impacts and intermediate outcomes, and that a more comprehensive and sophisticated theory of change should be devised for development interventions. Second, it follows that a broader range of methodologies and tools needs to be drawn upon, to assess the more complex and intangible impacts of social protection programmes that are not amenable to simple quantitative measurement of changes 'before and after'. However, as will be argued below, this is not an argument for favouring qualitative methods and rejecting quantitative methods; instead, it is an argument for a mixed methods approach that makes full use of the insights that can be derived from both quantitative and qualitative methods.

2 Mixing methods in evaluating social protection programmes: an application

The insight that evaluations – or policy research more broadly – should not be based on a single source of data or method is not new. Research across the social sciences has seen a steady expansion of the use of mixed methods, or so-called 'q-squared' methods, in the past decade (Shaffer 2013), including in the field of impact evaluation. The adoption of mixed methods is considered as one way to ensure that an impact study is well contextualised and policy relevant (White 2008).

Different ways of mixing methods in evaluations have been identified. Greene, Caracelli and Graham (1997, in Stern *et al.* 2012) propose triangulation, complementarity, development, new start and expansion. Carvalho and White (1997) identified three ways of mixing methods for policy research, namely integrating methods; verification, triangulation and enrichment of findings; and merging

Box 2 Case study – Evaluation design of SCTPP, Tigray, Ethiopia

Quantitative data and methods:

- Sample includes a treatment group of 1,630 SCTPP households, a control group of 1,589 households that were eligible but not included in the programme and a random sample of 446 non-eligible households (to allow for comparisons with the rest of population).
- Methods for data collection include household-level surveys (at baseline, every four months throughout and endline) and community surveys (at baseline and endline).
- Techniques for data analysis focus on difference-in-differences based on matching methods and regression discontinuity design.

Qualitative data and methods:

- Sample includes 13 programme staff, 23 community members, 31 CCC members, 68 SCTPP participants and 50 SCTPP non-participants.
- Methods for data collection include key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), case studies (CSs), participatory rural appraisal (PRA) (at baseline and endline).
- Techniques for data analysis focus on the identification of trends and patterns across groups as well as individual narratives and testimonies.

Source: Berhane *et al.* (2012a, b).

findings for policy recommendations. Tarrow (2009, in Stern *et al.* 2012) offers various tools through which qualitative and quantitative methods can add value to evaluation, including process tracing, sequencing of qualitative and quantitative studies and the use of quantitative data as a point of departure for qualitative research.

The various typologies on mixing methods point towards various common elements. Integration and development of methods includes designing qualitative or quantitative research instruments based on findings from either quantitative or qualitative research, deciding on respondents for qualitative fieldwork based on quantitative research, deciding on stratification of quantitative samples based on qualitative fieldwork, and using qualitative work to pre-test the quantitative survey questionnaire. Quantitative results can be triangulated through qualitative research and vice versa. Further, qualitative work can lead to hypotheses to be tested in quantitative work and can enrich quantitative findings by giving answers to the 'why' and 'how' questions. Finally, findings following the combination of both methods can generate a comprehensive set of policy recommendations.

These three different ways have all been applied to the case study presented in this paper, namely the Social Cash Transfer Pilot Programme (SCTPP) in Tigray, Ethiopia (see Box 1 for a description of the programme). We reflect on how methods have been mixed (see Box 2 for a description of the evaluation design) and particularly on how this has helped towards gaining an insight into the three 'extensions' that are highlighted in the alternative

evaluation framework. The integration of methods and verification of findings appear most relevant for the aspects of programme processes and social dynamics. Merging of findings for policy recommendations is particularly pertinent for the element of feedback loops.

Programme processes

Findings on programme processes have been obtained by both integration of methods and triangulation and verification of findings across methods. The sequencing of data collection efforts (see Annex 1 for an overview) gives rise to particular opportunities for the integration of methods in this study. With the quantitative baseline preceding the qualitative baseline fieldwork, it was possible for preliminary findings to inform the design of qualitative data collection tools and for the qualitative research to verify and deepen results from the quantitative survey. In terms of programme processes, this particularly pertains to payment processes and targeting procedures. The availability of both quantitative and qualitative data from a control group proved to be imperative in understanding targeting procedures, not only in terms of its efficiency but also with respect to impacts on social dynamics.

Quantitative results regarding **payment processes** suggested that almost half of all programme participants needed more than three hours to reach their pay-point to collect their transfers. In order to verify findings and gain further insight into how participants reached their pay-point, the problems they faced in travelling to and from the pay-point and how they dealt with them, follow-up questions were included in

Box 3 Programme processes – findings on payment processes

The use of ‘designated persons’ was most prevalent in Hintalo Wajirat, a rural district that was under-supplied with pay-points. Less than half of SCTPP beneficiaries collected their cash transfers personally.

Findings of the quantitative baseline survey on collection of payment



Programme staff identified various difficulties related to the assignment of designated persons and their roles in the collection of transfers.

‘We observe some difficulties, for example there was a woman who had designated one person and she failed to collect her payments for two months. Her designator abused the payment and took it for himself. The CCC has accused him in social court and forced him to pay her.’ (CCC member)

‘Distance to pay-point is not much of a problem for this tabia [sub-district]. Even without transport, they can walk – it is only one hour. The main problem is the designation issue – old people or disabled people are allowed to designate another person to collect the money, but they don’t do it officially, they just send someone to Adi Gudum, then DECSI cannot pay them and the tabia administration can’t help them.’ (Social worker)

Source: (Berhane et al. 2012a).

the qualitative research. It emerged from the quantitative findings that half of all programme participants rely on so-called ‘designated persons’ to collect the cash transfer on their behalf and that in half the cases this is due to the long distance to the pay-point. The qualitative fieldwork confirmed that distance to pay-point was the most important reason for relying on a designated person and also revealed particular issues around relying on such persons. Firstly, the practical procedure for assigning a designated person was not clear to all participants, leading to confusion and in some cases prevented participants from collecting the transfers. Secondly, the reliance on designated persons gave rise to tensions as payments or other favours were asked in return for collection of transfers. Both issues undermine the effectiveness of the SCTPP and may reduce its impact; participants are less likely to receive their full

transfer amounts, and community tensions may weaken informal support networks and reciprocal behaviour that are imperative for local multiplier effects. Findings in Box 3 illustrate the interplay of issues around the use of designated persons for collection of payments. To ensure continuous collection of information on this topic through the remainder of the evaluation, questions on these concerns were consequently integrated in the monitoring survey.

With respect to **targeting procedures**, the quantitative baseline survey found that inclusion errors were low (i.e. few non-eligible households were included in the SCTPP as participants). For purposes of verification and further investigation, particularly with respect to exclusion errors (i.e. households that are eligible but are not included in the programme), the qualitative fieldwork included a

Box 4 Programme processes – findings on targeting

Respondents' answers to the question: 'Are there any people who have been included in the SCTPP but are not eligible?' suggest that the targeting had been well done, leaving little possibility of inclusion errors.

'No, because the selection was carried out based on the prioritised problems that the poorest came first.' (CCC member)

On the other hand, it emerged from responses to the question 'Are there any people who are eligible but excluded from the SCTPP?' that there are substantial exclusion errors.

'Yes. Because of the quota. The total number of eligible persons in the district is 1,200 but the participants are 749. So 451 persons are excluded because of the quota. Prioritised based on their means to support their households.' (District official)

'Yes, in relation to the excluding of eligible households (105 households) because of the quota issue. These households have considered as if the CCC has deliberately excluded them and this has created tensions.' (Social worker)

In response to questions about fairness of the programme's selection procedure, opinions were mixed:

'It is not fair and transparent, because people who are wealthier than me are participating in the programme.' (Non-participant in control group)

'Yes, it is fair, because the targeting has started at grass roots level, where everybody knows each other's problems and potentials.' (Programme participant)

Source: Berhane et al. (2012a).

Box 5 Unintended impacts – findings on CCCs

In response to questions about decisions for taking on the role as CCC member and challenges in performing that role, CCC members answered:

'There was a tradition among the community to support the poor. Based on this tradition the government took the initiative to establish the CCC and the traditional cooperation among the community becomes formal.' (CCC member)

'Yes, the CCC activities affect our private businesses but we the CCC members have already decided to assist our people just like the fighters were doing during the 17 years of struggle.' (CCC member)

When asked about challenges following the role of CCCs in the implementation of SCTPP, social workers highlighted the problems following CCC members' need to juggle multiple responsibilities.

'Most members of the CCC are farmers and do not get payment for their services in CCC. Being farmers they have their own activities on their farm, so often you cannot get them to come to meetings. So we lose participation in CCC meetings. The major problem faced by the CCC is non-attendance of committee members at meetings, because they have their own activities.' (Social worker)

Source: Berhane et al. (2012a).

household wealth exercise. This exercise asked community members to identify different wealth categories, formulate criteria for such categories and group households in their community according to those categories. The households' wealth status was subsequently mapped against programme participation. The situation of households that were considered eligible for programme participation based on their wealth status but not included in the programme, as well as the converse, were discussed in more detail. This exercise helped to triangulate findings from the quantitative baseline survey but especially allowed for understanding perceptions of programme participants, non-participants and programme staff. Findings confirmed that inclusion errors were low but also revealed that the programme suffers from notable exclusion. Interviews with programme staff revealed these to be a direct result of the quota imposed on programme participation. They also pointed towards community tensions resulting from the imposition of such a quota, as many households not participating in the programme felt (understandably) that their exclusion was unfair. Qualitative fieldwork with respondents from the control group highlighted feelings of unfairness. Findings in Box 4 illustrate perceptions about inclusion and exclusion errors.

Unintended impacts

Qualitative and participatory methods are generally better equipped to provide insight into issues around unintended impacts, particularly with respect to social dynamics and effects on stakeholders other than programme participants. As the SCTPP builds heavily on community involvement and volunteerism, insight into how the programme impacts on

local support networks and reciprocal behaviour is imperative. Qualitative fieldwork was used to elicit opinions and experiences from programme staff, community members and members of the CCCs. Findings raised questions regarding responsibilities and workload of CCC members and the interplay with sustaining their own livelihoods and the functioning of the programme.

Group discussions with CCC members revealed that many regard their work with the CCC as their (religious and moral) duty and part of their commitment to help the vulnerable members in their community. Most CCC members consider it a valuable and positive experience. Programme staff highlighted the benefits of community engagement in terms of bottom-up involvement, empowerment and ownership. Notwithstanding these positive experiences, CCC members also indicated that the SCTPP-related responsibilities and activities take up considerable amounts of time and interfere with daily activities. Programme staff also experienced this to be a problem, indicating that the clash of SCTPP-related activities with CCC members' own livelihood activities makes them unreliable and difficult to work with. In addition to the unintended adverse consequences for CCC members and their livelihoods, the concurrent imperfect implementation also points towards a broken link in the programme's theory of change that undermines its overall impact; links to complementary services and advice on how to spend the cash transfers are considered key elements of SCTPP and CCC members are instrumental in reaching those objectives. Given findings about unforeseen impacts on CCCs (see Box 5), further questions about the extent of the time burden on individual CCC members and the scale of the issue will be included in the quantitative endline survey.

Feedback loops

Insight into the 'recursive causality' feedback loop in the alternative framework is obtained through both integration of methods and verification of findings. As discussed above, this feedback loop refers specifically to the ways in which programme impacts can reinforce or undermine each other. Programme processes play an important part in this. An example of a positive loop in the SCTPP refers to the payment processes. Despite problems with distance to the pay-point and issues around designated persons, quantitative findings from the baseline survey and monitoring surveys show that the large majority of programme participants do receive their payments on time and in full. The regularity of full receipt of the payment is imperative for the programme to maximise its positive impacts: it instils confidence in programme participants, supports savings and longer term investment strategies and induces multiplier effects through positive effects on the local economy and strengthening of community networks. The extent of this positive loop is to be further investigated in the impact assessment based on both the quantitative and qualitative endline surveys.

Box 6 Feedback loops – findings on complementary services

Quantitative findings from the baseline survey indicated that only 6% of households received services from their CCC other than assistance related to SCTPP. Follow-up questions in the qualitative fieldwork explained this further.

'CCC members teach us to send our children to school in public meetings and church ceremony. They also promote sanitation such as dry latrine construction, clothes washing, etc.' (Community member)

'Except in the SCTPP I don't see any kind of assistance from the CCC.' (Programme participant)

Source: Berhane *et al.* (2012a).

The combined analysis of quantitative and qualitative findings on the receipt of additional services from CCCs pointed towards a potentially negative feedback loop. As the SCTPP aims to improve children's wellbeing with respect to a range of different outcomes, including education and health, the provision of additional services is considered an important element of the programme. It emerged from the combined analysis of quantitative and qualitative data that very few participants received other services from the CCCs and that the few services that are provided mainly pertain to awareness raising and advice (see Box 6). The lack of access to additional services undermines the potential positive impact of SCTPP as transfers may not be used to their full potential in terms of providing education, care and support for children, for example.

The integration of methods and verification of data, particularly on programme processes, provided input for the 'deliberate learning' feedback loop. Findings from the baseline phase of the programme were reported back to the Regional Government of Tigray and other stakeholders during a dissemination workshop, providing an explicit process that allowed for adjustments of the programme following identification of challenges or opportunities. For example, the issues that came to light with respect to distance to payment point and reliance on a designated person for the collection of transfers led to inclusion of more pay-points. The quantitative monitoring surveys allow for following up on improvements as a result of the increase of the number of pay-points. Opportunities for lessons learned to be fed back into programme implementation are mostly linked to key dissemination moments planned after the baseline phase, midway through the programme and at the end of the programme period (at which point a decision will be made about the overall future of the programme).

3 Lessons learned

The discussion above clearly shows how the use of multiple sources of data and methods is useful in providing insights into the three extensions in the alternative evaluation framework. The use of a single method – either quantitative or qualitative, cannot provide comparable breadth and depth of information. The integration of methods and verification of findings proved to be particularly useful for the analysis of programme processes and social dynamics. In terms of programme processes, quantitative findings informed the design of qualitative tools in the baseline phase of the survey and qualitative fieldwork was used to verify, contextualise and deepen those quantitative findings. With respect to social dynamics, results from the qualitative fieldwork pointed towards new issues that merited further triangulation and exploration using the quantitative tools in the evaluation's monitoring and endline phases. This combined use of methods also gave insight into the framework's 'recursive causality' feedback loop in terms of processes and dynamics that can both undermine and reinforce positive impacts of the programme. Findings from the quantitative and qualitative baseline phase were merged to contribute to the programme's 'deliberate learning' feedback loop.

Despite the benefits and value added as a result of the use of mixed methods in the evaluation of the SCTPP, we argue that most common forms of combining methods do not yet reach far enough. We identify a number of reasons:

- The integration of methods is undertaken in a very sequential manner, presupposing the extent to which findings from one method can inform another method. In the case of the SCTPP evaluation, the quantitative baseline survey was planned before the qualitative fieldwork. This allowed for the qualitative tools to be informed by the quantitative findings but prevented any qualitative information to be fed into quantitative data collection.
- Both types of methods used were very structured and focused in nature, with the main aim to investigate predetermined hypotheses and research questions. These hypotheses are strongly informed by the programme's 'theory of change' and the assumed pathways to impact. Such structured methods are strong in generating information about those assumed pathways and the extent to which the programme leads to expected impacts but is weaker in terms of capturing unforeseen side effects (positive or negative) or perverse incentives.
- The use of mixed methods in this evaluation was tied to the programme period and constituted a baseline, monitoring and endline phase. The endline quantitative survey and qualitative fieldwork take place around the time the last cash transfer is provided. Arguably the real impact of a programme can only be observed well after the programme has finished; i.e. can any positive

outcomes that were found at the end of the programme still be observed several years down the line?

4 Conclusion

The lessons learned from the analysis in this paper – based on both the positive experiences with the use of mixed methods in the case study from Tigray and the reflection on its shortcomings – hold a number of implications when aiming to analyse social protection programmes in line with the alternative evaluation framework. It follows that:

- The evaluation of social protection programmes needs to draw upon a broad range of methodologies and tools. This is necessary for triangulation and verification of findings as well as for providing depth and texture to the analysis.
- Research methods should include a mix of both structured and more exploratory approaches, particularly to explore and capture unforeseen side-effects and assess the more complex and intangible impacts of social protection programmes that are not amenable to simple quantitative measurement of changes 'before and after'.
- Evaluations of social protection programmes should integrate qualitative and quantitative research from the moment of its design through to analysis and write-up, allowing for more 'cross-fertilisation' between methods than possible in the case of rigid sequencing of data collection and analysis.
- The use of control groups and panels is vital across all tools and methods, and should not be exclusive to collection of quantitative data. Experiences and opinions of those not participating in the programme can provide crucial insight into programme processes, unintended impacts and factors undermining or strengthening pathways to impact that may not be obtained from participants. The inclusion of their voices in the 'deliberate learning' feedback loop is of importance for both instrumental and moral reasons.
- Data collection and research efforts should extend beyond the time span of the social protection programme. Whilst data collection in the endline phase of an evaluation allows for assessing outcomes at the close of the programme, a programme's real impact can only be assessed several years afterwards, when outcomes lead to impacts.

In sum, the use of mixed methods in evaluating social protection programmes is undoubtedly preferred to the application of a single tool or method. However, an extension of the range of impacts to be evaluated, as proposed in the alternative framework for social protection programmes, needs to go hand in hand with similar innovative extensions in the ways in which methods are mixed.

Note

- 1 We would like to thank Barbara Befani and Chris Barnett for their helpful comments, from which this paper has greatly benefited.

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Annex 1

		Quantitative household survey	Quantitative community survey	Quantitative monitoring survey	Qualitative data collection	
2012	May	█	█			
	June	█	█			
	July				█	baseline
	August				█	
	September			█		
	October					
	November					
	December					
2013	January			█		
	February					
	March					
	April					
	May			█		
	June					monitoring
	July					
	August					
	September			█		
	October					
	November					
	December					
2014	January			█		
	February					
	March					
	April				█	
	May	█	█		█	endline
	June	█	█			
	July					

“ [A]ny programme’s achievement of desired positive impacts is mediated and often compromised by programme design and implementation processes and by social dynamics – two sets of causal factors that are inadequately recognised by programme implementers and rarely considered in impact evaluations... a broader range of methodologies and tools needs to be drawn upon, to assess the more complex and intangible impacts of social protection programmes ”

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