On the Discourses of Social Protection Distribution: Insights from Indonesia

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This study aimed to discuss the distribution accuracy of Social Protection Programs in Indonesia. Specifically, the main focus was on its connection with deservingness criteria and the selection method. A case study in the Purbalingga district showed the unsuitability of nationally imposed criteria and weaknesses of the centralised selection of beneficiaries. A community-based targeting approach was simulated and could overcome most of the problems. Furthermore, it can be adapted in other localities and developing countries due to its acceptability and accuracy.

Keywords: Social Protection; Criteria of Deservingness; Community Based Targeting

Social protection programs are now implemented in many developing countries to alleviate poverty. These include non-contributory support and distribution of basic needs, sharing commonalities by targeting the poor and vulnerable groups. The coverage and reduced benefits to the poor inhibit the effectiveness of the programs (Cook & Pincus, 2014; Gabel, 2012; Ramesh, 2014; Widjaja & Simanjuntak, 2010). This is attributed to political clientelism, elite capture, corruption, social exclusion, the inefficiency of targeting, lack of transparency, and improper design of transfers (Akerkar et al., 2016). In general, these conditions are attributed to weak government management and the problematic criteria of deservingness.

Literature on deservingness focuses on "who" within a community deserves help and relief and the appropriate criteria (Tarkiain-

en, 2017). Deservingness is often determined based on five aspects: control, need, identity, attitude, and reciprocity (Oorschot, 2000). The less the control of neediness, the greater the level of need. Similarly, the closer to the identity of the poor, the more deserving a program. The more compliant the attitude and the reciprocation, the more deserving the people are to receive help and relief.

If social protection programs focus on reducing poverty, the ideal criteria of deservingness should be income level. However, income information is often not available in most developing countries, a problem that can be addressed through the Proxy Means Testing (PMT) and Community Based Targeting methods. These two methods are often utilized by developing countries. PMT assumes that household assets are hard to conceal from enumerators. The data of demographic profile and asset ownership of households are collected and used to calculate the index. However, only the ones with the minimum score deserve to receive the programs. Contrary to PMT, Community Based Targeting assumes that the wealth can hardly be hidden from neighbours than the enumerators. The community is often involved in selecting the beneficiaries by formulating local criteria of deservingness, making wealth rankings, or validating the list made by the government (Alatas et al., 2012; Conning & Kevane, 2002).

Making clear the definition and measurement of deservingness enhances program implementations. This is because the state-designed programs are often affected by micro-politics in rural areas (Rai & Smucker, 2016; Woods, 2003). Asset-based criteria are still amongst the most valid, reliable, and easy to observe criteria for selecting program beneficiaries in poor regions (Haughton & Khandker, 2009; Sahn & Stifel, 2003). Transparency and access to information in beneficiary selection enhances targeting efficiency (Shankar et al., 2011). For instance, it can create a more suitable definition of poverty, provide a complaint mechanism, and better update government databases of poor people.

Indonesia is among the developing countries implementing social protection. However, it is significantly affected by distribution problems. A total of 10.7% of its population live under the poverty line of U.S. $1.56 Purchasing Power Parity (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2017). Furthermore, about 30% of the population has income just slightly above the line, hence they are vulnerable to falling into

poverty (Sumner & Edward, 2014; Sutiyo & Maharjan, 2011). Since 2000, the government has implemented various social protection programs targeting 40% of the population with the lowest income. However, an income-based definition of poverty is not always applicable. Indonesia is a very diverse country, with each locality having unique and separated characteristics of poverty. The government uses the PMT method to select the program beneficiaries, an approach that cannot effectively deal with local diversities. It creates errors in program distribution where the poor receive few benefits (Nooteboom, 2017; Ramesh, 2014; Sparrow et al., 2013; Widjaja & Simanjuntak, 2010).

Some studies have been conducted to identify possible ways to improve program distribution. In most cases, a new index to represent a more comprehensive poverty profile is proposed (Chen & Schreiner, 2009; Sumarto et al., 2007). However, these studies are often conducted at the macro level, which is more calculative but does not consider the local context. This study hypothesises that the locality factors cannot be underestimated in poverty alleviation. A history of centralization in Indonesia shows that most centrally formulated programs are not matched with local realities (Antlöv, 2003; Bebbington et al., 2006; Guggenheim, 2006).

This study aims to discuss how the centralised mechanism of beneficiary selection is implemented and the impacts on distribution problems. Furthermore, it simulates a more accurate method based on community participation to formulate a new criterion of deservingness. This study will first examine the socioeconomic condition of the localities, policy context, and distribution problem. Apart from developing a design of community-based selection, the possibility of applying this system is empirically examined. This allows the strength and weaknesses of this system to be analysed. Furthermore, deep academic discourses can be conducted, apart from allowing adaptation in other developing countries.

Methods

A case study was conducted in the Purbalingga District of Central Java Province to understand the nature of program implementation. This area is located at a longitude of 7010'–7029' south and

latitude of 101011′–109035′ east. It was selected because it is the poorest district in a poor province with rich data about poverty and related programs.
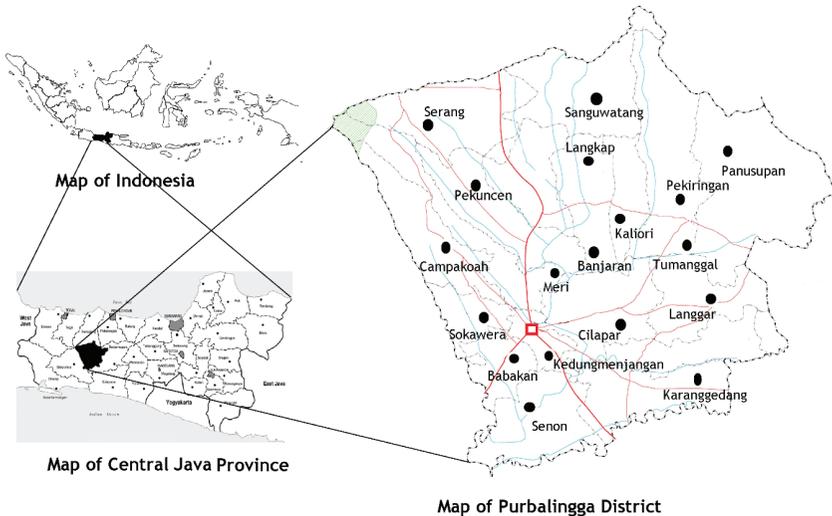

Figure. 1 The Map of Purbalingga District, presenting study villages in black dots: Babakan; Banjaran; Campakoah; Cilapar; Kaliori; Karanggedang; Kedungmenjangan; Pakuncen; Langgar; Langkap; Meri; Panusupan; Pekiringan; Sanguwatang; Senon; Serang; Sokawera; Tumanggal.

The study population includes all the poor and the vulnerable individuals listed in the Unified Database of Poverty of Purbalingga District, accounting for 100,281 households. The database was accessed with the permission of the local authorities and used through ethical principles only for the study. The sample is selected based on a multistage random technique, specifically 648 households. Eighteen villages within the district are purposely selected based on geographical condition. The population in each village is grouped based on gender and occupation of household heads. Based on these groupings, 36 samples were randomly selected from each village.

The fieldwork was conducted in July and August 2015. A total of 18 trained enumerators were employed to distribute questionnaires

to 648 respondents. The objective was to collect data on socioeconomic profiles and the list of programs received by the respondents. Closer investigations were conducted by the author through in-depth interviews, observations, and Focused Group Discussion (FGD). In this regard, the key informants included the poor, local officers, and prominent community members. The interviews were conducted in the local language, though some selected excerpts were translated into English. The FGDs were conducted two times, where the first one focused on collecting data on how informants interpreted and experienced the existing criteria of deservingness and formulated alternative criteria deemed better. The results were analysed and the proposed criteria were simulated in the second FGD to determine their functionality. The participants of FGD evaluated whether the criteria were valid and satisfying. This study used qualitative techniques and descriptive statistics for analysing the data.

Results

Locality Context: Socioeconomic Condition
of Study Sites and Respondents

Since poverty is often defined based on a local perspective, it is vital to consider the sociological nature of the study sites. The study sites were located on Java Island, which is 8% of the Indonesian territory but is inhabited by 60% of all Indonesians. Overpopulation on this island has created a scarcity of cropland. Although the population in the study sites consisted mainly of farmers, most of them were landless. The landholding was usually less than 0.5 Hectare per household, and it was challenging to find a farmer with landholding above one hectare. The ones with more than one hectare of cropland were categorised as rich men because landholding size was traditionally the most accepted measurement of wealth.

With such small plots, most people cannot rely on farming as a livelihood source. Most farmers practised part-time husbandry by breeding chickens and goats for sustenance. Most of the farmers in each household had two to five goats. Cows and buffaloes were deemed expensive and served as a saving measure and symbol of

wealth. Various occupations were adopted for alternative income sources, including being transportation workers, traders, and masons. However, the informal sectors of the economy still dominated the occupations with no formal contract or protection. Moreover, the wages did not always comply with minimum standards, with the protection against job loss, and provision of pension schemes being rare. Many respondents perceived that only civil servants, the army, and the police were jobs offering proper wages and job security. The people with other jobs thought they were eligible to be the program beneficiaries.

Most houses have been transformed from traditional to permanent forms in the last decades. The majority of them had brick walls and tile floors. There were still a few houses with wood or bamboo walls and dirt floors. Infrastructure development improved basic public services. Public water facilities were available in most study villages. Nearly the entire population accessed an electricity network, meaning that they could use radios, televisions, and refrigerators. Furthermore, handphones were no longer exclusive items. The market penetration and availability of installment payments helped households buy motorcycles. Only cars were still perceived as luxurious goods and symbols of wealth. Housing conditions and car ownership could still differentiate the poor from the wealthy; however, access to electricity and clean water and ownership of handphones and motorbikes could not be used to differentiate the rich from the poor.

Statistically, the majority of the respondents had males as heads of households (89%), with primary levels of education (52%), and jobs in agriculture (39%). The average number per household was 3.86. About 5% of households had members with physical disabilities. Similarly, 16% had members suffering from chronic illness. A total of 3% had pregnant persons in their households, while 25% and 51% had a child under five years and school-age (6–18 years), respectively (Table 1).

Table 1. Socioeconomic Condition of the Respondents

No.	Socio-Economic Condition	Number	Percentage
1	Gender of head of household		
	Male	577	89%
	Female	71	11%
2	Education of household heads		
	Having no formal education	274	42%
	Primary school	335	52%
	Middle school	35	5%
	High school	4	1%
3	Occupation of household heads		
	Agriculture	250	39%
	Labour	203	31%
	Business	52	8%
	Service	48	7%
	Other	95	15%
4	Households with physical disabilities	31	5%
5	Households with a chronic illness	102	16%
6	Households with a pregnant	18	3%
7	Households with a child under five years	164	25%
8	Households with a child of school age (6–18 years)	328	51%

The table reflects that the economic productivity of the respondents might be low due to human resource problems. The education level was quite low, with substantial physical problems, such as chronic illnesses and disabilities. A substantial portion of respondents had children and students in their households. This presented the need to expend costs for childcare and education, which created additional spending for the respondents. The low economic productivity of the households, along with the need for education and health spending, made the social protection programs essential factors in household livelihood and survival.

*Policy Context: The Existing Programs
and Method of Beneficiary Selection*

Within the study sites, there were programs delivered to households, including the following:

1. Rice Program (*Raskin*): Distributes 15 kg of subsidised rice per month to the household.
2. Health Insurance (*Jamkesnas*): Distributes a card for free medication in hospitals.
3. Conditional Cash Transfer (*Program Keluarga Harapan*): Distributes cash to poor households with pregnant women and pupils, to help them improve the health and education of the members.
4. Unconditional Cash Transfer (*Bantuan Langsung Tunai*): Distributes cash to the poor to maintain their purchasing power during price increases. The year 2015 was the last time the government implemented the program after the withdrawal of the fuel price subsidy.

The government applied the PMT to select the beneficiaries. The welfare status of the households was calculated based on several criteria, including the size of the house; the type of floor, wall, and latrine; access to clean water and electricity; and cooking fuel. Efforts to enumerate and update the data of poor households were periodically conducted by the statistical agency in 2005, 2008, 2011, and 2015. The enumeration result was calculated by the Ministry of Social to create the official beneficiary list, becoming the only legal reference in the program distribution.

The centralised mechanism used in enumeration created very limited involvement of local officers and the community to assist and verify the data. The integrity and capacity of the enumerators varied, creating substantial challenges in the enlistment of the beneficiaries. In some study villages, the enumerators did not visit the households for observation. According to the respondents, the enumerators did not come to observe, nor were they interviewed. Some headmen stated that the enumerators only came to the village offices to sign the letters but never went to the houses of the poor. The

data were filled in at the desk based on estimation with limited references. Neither the local officers nor the community could control the accuracy of the filled data nor understand how the Means-Test is calculated. These enumeration problems undermined the legitimacy of the list of beneficiaries issued by the government before the communities.

Problems of Program Distribution

The distribution problems are shown by inaccuracy and leakage. Specifically, inaccuracy means that the poor do not get the program. Leakage is a condition in which the cash or benefit in kind received by the beneficiaries is not in the same amount as the stated regulation. Therefore, the inaccuracy of distribution was 3% in the Rice Program, 14% in Health Insurance, 25% for Unconditional Cash Transfer, and 49% for Conditional Cash Transfer. There was 52% leakage of benefits in the Rice Program and 2% in Conditional Cash Transfer (Table 2).

Table 2. Inaccuracy of Distribution and Leakage of Benefits

No.	Name of Program	Inaccuracy of Distribution	Leakage of Benefits
1	Rice Program	3%	52%
2	Health Insurance	14%	0%
3	Conditional Cash Transfer	49%	2%
4	Unconditional Cash Transfer	25%	0%

The central government periodically delivered rice to village offices in the Rice Program. Afterward, the village officers distributed the rice to the beneficiaries, where about 97% of the respondents were beneficiaries. The other 3% of respondents did not receive the rice, though they were listed. In most cases, they intentionally rejected the aid because they did not perceive themselves as poor, depriving them of their rights. The actual number of beneficiaries in all villages was larger than those listed because the rice was distributed to the non-poor. This meant that the amount of the rice received by the respondents was far below the stated amount. On average, they received 7 kg of rice per month, just half of the stated 15 kg. Only 10% received 15 kg, which complied with the stated amount.

In the Health Insurance Program, the central government issued a card, upon which the names of the beneficiaries were printed. About 86% of respondents were beneficiaries of the program, while the other 14% did not receive insurance. There was no leakage of benefits because the program did not transfer kinds of cash but medical service.

The central government distributed cash to poor households with pregnant women, children under five years, and pupils in the Conditional Cash Transfer. A total of 39% had a pregnant member, a child under five years, and pupils, hence they deserved the program. However, only 20% of respondents became beneficiaries. This implies that there were 49% inaccuracies in the program. The cash was directly disbursed from the central government to the beneficiaries' bank accounts, creating almost no leakage. Furthermore, the funds received by the beneficiaries ranged from IDR110,000 to IDR1,090,000 monthly, depending on the number of children under five years, pupils, and the pregnancies in the households.

In the Unconditional Cash Transfer, the central government distributed cash every month a year to increase the purchasing power of the poor. This came after the withdrawal of the fuel price subsidy in 2014. The cash was distributed through post offices, in which a computer system screened ID cards and payments. About 75% of the respondents received the cash, leaving the other 25% without. The beneficiaries received IDR185,500 per month, which was lower than the stated amount of IDR200,000 monthly. There were some cases in which the beneficiaries were asked to contribute some cash to the local officers or share with other community members.

The overall inaccuracies and leakages were attributed to the bias in the enumeration. The list issued by the government is perceived as illegitimate, lacking the involvement of the community and local officers who claimed to have been excluded from the process. This created a low level of understanding of the beneficiary selection. There was no answer on why a household perceived poor by the community was not a beneficiary. It would have been interesting to know why those perceived not to be poor were listed. The list of beneficiaries was issued by the statistical agency beyond the control of the local government. When the list came to the hands of local officers, most of them thought it was invalid. There was a concern for a possible protest due to social jealousy from those not listed. Since there was no clear mechanism of complaint and procedure to propose a revision, the local officers unilaterally revised the list. They equally distributed the aid to the community or reduced the benefits to the unlisted poor.

Local officers acknowledged that there were inaccuracies and leakages, though they were perceived as unavoidable. Although the higher officers in the district government knew about the problems, the local officers were never punished. The unilateral decision of village officers regarding program distribution was perceived as the solution to the invalidity of the beneficiary list and the best way to maintain social harmony. Furthermore, a case of corruption was found in a village, where the local officer unilaterally cut money from the Conditional Cash Transfer under the pretext of transportation and administrative cost. The distribution of this program required the beneficiaries to withdraw the money from the post office or the bank account directly. The cases of unilateral reduction occur mainly when the money is collectively withdrawn by the local officers and cash given to the beneficiary in the village office. The case is resolved through agreement and deliberative methods rather than administrative and legal punishment[1].

Community Based Targeting

Several criteria were used in PMT to select the beneficiaries. These included the size of the house, the type of floor, wall, and latrine, access to clean water and electricity, and the cooking fuel used. Although the criteria were simple, they were criticised as

unsuitable for fitting the various local conditions. For instance, latrine conditions and types of cooking fuels were difficult to observe. The surveyed households could easily fool the enumerators. Moreover, the most accepted well-being indicators in the study sites were not used. These were asset ownership, mainly cars and buffalo or cows, and landholding size to filter the rich.

The FGD involved community representatives and local officers in evaluating the PMT, especially by identifying the criteria deemed unsuitable and their reason. This led to a list of criteria that were sociologically problematic in the district, including:

1. Type of roof: Most houses in the study sites similarly had plain roofs.
2. Access to electricity: The coverage of electricity in Indonesia, especially Java, is nearly 100%.
3. Access to clean water: Most houses in the study sites used public water pumps.
4. Cooking fuels: Most people in the study sites used wood for cooking, complemented by gas.

The use of those above criteria was perceived as confusing and invalid. Mr. Latif, the headman in Kedungmenjangan stated the following:

> I cannot understand why the statistical agency used the criteria of electricity. Almost all people here already have electricity. Also, type of roof. House roofs of the rich and the poor are the same here. All used tiled roofs, with no differences. If anybody understands, please explain to me why these criteria are used.

The participants were asked to define poverty based on local conceptions and formulate local criteria for deservingness that were easy to apply. Most participants agreed that poverty meant an inability to live properly. However, many disagreed with the possibility of it being measured only from income. It should be measured based on the standard of life itself, specifically having a house, a job, cropland, and the ability to pay a doctor when sick. The discussions resulted in a set of alternative criteria deemed the better benchmark for describing poverty, as follows:

1. Types of floors: The poor had dirt floors while the non-poor had tiles.
2. Types of walls: The poor had bamboo or wood while the non-poor had cement brick.
3. The health condition of household members: The poor had members with physical disabilities and chronic illnesses.
4. The size of landholdings: There was clear differentiation of landholding between the poor and the non-poor.

Further criteria were suggested to prevent the non-poor from becoming program beneficiaries:

1. Ownership of a car: Only the rich were able to buy.
2. Ownership of cows or buffaloes: The poor could not buy and breed them.
3. Occupation as civil servant, army, or police: They provide proper wages, insurance, and pension schemes. These jobs were deemed to be better in coping with economic uncertainties.

The discussion participants understood that to be effective, the criteria should be easy to observe, simple to measure, and difficult to conceal. For instance, the ownership of jewelry and luxurious furniture were perceived to be wealth indicators. However, the community rejected their use because they were easy to hide. Similarly, ownership of motorcycles and handphones were not categorised as good criteria because most people already owned them. The community and local officers supported the assertion that the proposed criteria were easy to observe and hard to hide from neighbours and the government. They also covered local indicators of wealth in the study village, specifically the dwelling conditions, landholding size, and vehicles (Table 3).

Table 3. The Proposed Criteria of Deservingness

No	Criteria	Scoring and Interpretation
1	Types of floors	Dirt: 1 Other: 0
2	Types of walls	Bamboo or wood: 1 Other: 0
3	Health condition	Having household members with physical disabilities or chronic illnesses: 1 Other: 0
4	Size of landholding	Less than 0.5 Hectare: 1 More than 0.5 Hectare: 0
5	Having a car	Undeserved the program
6	Ownership of cows or buffaloes	Undeserved the program if you have at least three cows or buffaloes
7	Occupation as civil servant, army, or police	Undeserved the program

In the second FGD, the proposed criteria were simulated in one selected village. The participants ranked households by using the scores and the filters based on the criteria. Most participants could identify the condition of their neighbours. It was almost impossible to conceal the real dwelling condition and the ownership of assets. When the criteria were applied to rank the welfare status of households, a new list of poor people was formed. Some of the previously listed households in the government database were excluded. However, some households previously excluded were also included. The time needed to finish the ranking for a village was about half a day. The whole process was inclined towards self-assessment of the household status rather than measuring or predicting the income.

It was unclear whether the list correlated with income level, such as those in PMT. The community-based targeting resulted in

a more legitimate list. A community member, Mr. Imam, stated the following about his satisfaction:

> It is just now that I am satisfied with the list because the rank appears fair. In case the government uses this list, the distribution will be better, and the people will not protest. Those not on the list will be open-hearted because the assessment is transparent and fair.

Creating the criteria by involving the community was also innovative and progressive. However, the applicability of this system still needs further improvement and advocacy. Some indicators should be clearer, such as car ownership and whether it was for farming purposes. Some limitations of the community-based targeting were identified. This included the inefficiency in making criteria and ranking the household and the risks of opinion driven by local elites. These limitations were addressed by a participant of the FGD from the Local Planning Agency, Mr. Danang, who stated the following:

> Generally, it is good to involve the community in selecting the program's beneficiaries. This helps improve the program distribution's accuracy, transparency, and legitimacy. Some weaknesses include time inefficiency and the negative influence of local politics. Since it will improve the distribution, it has to be advocated for by the central government.

Despite all the limitations in the simulation, the local community could formulate the criteria of deservingness and identify the poor within the community. In general, community-based targeting is seen as able to overcome various weaknesses created by the centralised selection. The proposed criteria improve local satisfaction and are expected to minimise inaccuracies and leakages in the program distribution.

Discussion

The problems related to the distribution of social protection programs are attributed to the weaknesses of the central selection process and improper criteria of deservingness. In the study sites,

the inaccuracy ranges from 3% in the Rice Program, 14% Health Insurance, 25% Unconditional Cash Transfer, and 49% Conditional Cash Transfer. Furthermore, even those on the official list of beneficiaries do not always receive full benefits, as shown by leaked 52% in the Rice Program and 7% Unconditional Cash Transfer. The inaccuracies found in this study are lower than in Sumarto (2012). This implies that there may be some improvement in recent years. However, no matter how small the inaccuracies and leakages are, they create tension within the community. This study cannot provide the data on the proportion of those who should have been on the list but did not get listed.

Political clientelism, elite capture, corruption, social exclusion, inefficiency in targeting, lack of transparency and information, and the improper designing of social transfers are the causes of the distribution problems (Akerkar et al., 2016). This study elaborates on other factors responsible for the errors. Firstly, the variability in distribution accuracy is explained by the type of support distributed. Cash and food transfers are more prone to leakage, while using cards to access services ensures better distribution to the beneficiaries. The distribution through village offices like the Rice Program is more prone to leakage than the post offices like the Unconditional Cash Transfer and bank accounts, such as the Conditional Cash Transfer. Secondly, inaccuracies and leakages in distribution are inevitable because some deservingness criteria are unsuitable for local conditions. This relates to the local definition of poverty and the traditional measurement of wealth. The cause of leakages is not always intentional manipulation. Rather, the illegitimacy and invalidity of beneficiary lists issued by the government make local officers lack options except for modifying the distribution.

Income level is the basis for selecting the program beneficiaries. However, its utilization is almost impossible in developing countries dominated by informal sectors of the economy and a weak income report system. There are two options for altering the use of income level, including Proxy Means Testing through centralized enumeration and selection and Community Based Targeting by developing local poverty criteria and participatory selection of a beneficiary.

This study shows various weaknesses of centralized selection through Proxy Means Testing, including the unsuitability of some

national criteria to local conditions, challenges to ensuring that enumeration is properly conducted, and failure to prevent the possibility of corruption properly. Some common criteria should be made applicable to all possible eligible recipients countrywide, necessitating a clear definition of poverty. The central government should establish a broad term for poverty that encompasses nutrition, health, living conditions, and house assets. Moreover, the concept's measurement should not only be conducted by a centralized enumeration system. Various factors can lead to enumeration mistakes, such as lack of monitoring of the enumerators and weak coordination among government agencies. People's attitudes toward the programs can also be a challenge. Some people may try to hide the asset and provide the wrong answer to the enumerator based on the motivation to receive benefits from programs for which they are not qualified. Therefore, there is need to ensure that enumeration is properly conducted by improving monitoring and coordination.

Communities in the study site can formulate better alternative criteria of deservingness than the national ones. They can make a consensus to use the indicators of the type of floor and wall, health conditions of household members, and size of landholding. Several criteria also prevent the non-poor from being the beneficiaries, such as ownership of a car and cows or buffaloes and occupations of civil servants, army, or police. These criteria generally meet the aspect of deservingness, especially control, needs, and identity (Oorschot, 2000). However, it can still be improved by adding the nutrition status of household members and making different treatments and scoring for the indicators of the car ownership, considering whether it was for farming purposes or private transportation. There is a need to examine whether the proposed criteria tied to the study site apply to other regions. In principle, any criteria used in community-based targeting should be simple, easy to observe, difficult to conceal, and locally acceptable. With advocacy and capacity development, the community is expected to establish a more precise indicator to measure and rank household welfare.

Substantial revision in selecting beneficiaries helps ensure that only eligible people are listed in the program. In general, no method of beneficiary selection is perfect and free from weaknesses. However, the problems due to the centralized enumeration and beneficiary selection, as well as the ability of the local community to formulate

and implement local criteria of deservingness, show that these two methods can be combined. The government should start by establishing a clear definition of poverty made specifically to meet the program objectives and be sound and comprehensive enough to represent the multidimensionality of poverty. Furthermore, there is a need for a reliable and precise assessment tool to assess program eligibility. This can be achieved by ensuring that enumeration is properly conducted by improving monitoring systems and coordination of field agencies. There is also a need to complement the centralized selection with community-based targeting. Including local criteria of deservingness and the involvement of the local community in beneficiary selection help improve the program implementation.

If the government makes substantial efforts to revise the criteria and methods of selection, the negative consequences of the programs, including resentment from the people not listed and the potential for local conflict and open protest against the village officers, can be eliminated. Participation of the local community and transparency in beneficiary selection may help reduce the possibility of corruption and abuse of power in the program distribution. Although these may take time and decrease implementation efficiency at first, the distribution effectiveness will increase. This is in line with Shankar et al. (2011), stating that transparency and information in program distribution minimize miss-targeting and improves the overall impact of the programs on poverty alleviation.

Conclusion

The implementation of a centralised system to select the beneficiaries of social protection programs is ineffective and leads to inaccuracy and leakage of distribution. The weaknesses in the system include the unsuitability of nationally imposed criteria of deservingness, trouble in enumeration processes, and less community involvement in verifying the results of enumeration and selecting the beneficiaries. Community-based system targeting can be an alternative approach to overcome these weaknesses. Within this system, communities formulate criteria of deservingness based on local conditions and rank the household wealth to obtain the list of beneficiaries. With participation and transparency, complemented by assistance and facilitation from the government agency,

community-based targeting will create more accurate distribution and improve the implementation of Social Protection Programs.

Developing countries with the same distribution challenges should consider community-based targeting. Decentralizing beneficiary selection to the community is valuable for overcoming the weaknesses of the central enumeration method. This improves the accuracy of distribution and community knowledge and makes the program more sustainable in promoting social justice. In the long term, any social protection programs should be adaptable by prioritizing local social, economic, and political conditions in their implementation.

Endnotes

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