



OVERVIEW

Realizing the Full Potential of Social Safety Nets in Africa

Kathleen Beegle, Aline Coudouel,
and Emma Monsalve, Editors



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and Emma Monsalve, Editors**

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Contents of the Overview

<i>Foreword</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Foreword</i>	<i>xiii</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>xv</i>
<i>About the Authors and Contributors</i>	<i>xvii</i>
<i>Abbreviations</i>	<i>xxiii</i>
Overview: Realizing the Full Potential of Social Safety Nets in Africa	1
Reaching the Poor and Vulnerable in Africa through Social Safety Nets (Chapter 1)	2
Social Safety Nets Promote Poverty Reduction, Increase Resilience, and Expand Opportunities (Chapter 2)	11
Recognizing and Leveraging Politics to Expand and Sustain Social Safety Nets (Chapter 3)	17
Anchoring in Strong Institutions to Expand and Sustain Social Safety Nets (Chapter 4)	26
Harnessing Resources to Expand and Sustain Social Safety Nets (Chapter 5)	33
The Road Ahead for Bringing Social Safety Nets to Scale in Africa	41
References	42

Contents of the Full Volume

<i>Foreword</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Foreword</i>	<i>xiii</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>xv</i>
<i>About the Authors and Contributors</i>	<i>xvii</i>
<i>Abbreviations</i>	<i>xxiii</i>
Overview: Realizing the Full Potential of Social Safety Nets in Africa	1
Reaching the Poor and Vulnerable in Africa through Social Safety Nets (Chapter 1)	2
Social Safety Nets Promote Poverty Reduction, Increase Resilience, and Expand Opportunities (Chapter 2)	11
Recognizing and Leveraging Politics to Expand and Sustain Social Safety Nets (Chapter 3)	17
Anchoring in Strong Institutions to Expand and Sustain Social Safety Nets (Chapter 4)	26
Harnessing Resources to Expand and Sustain Social Safety Nets (Chapter 5)	33
The Road Ahead for Bringing Social Safety Nets to Scale in Africa	41
References	42
Introduction	47
1 Reaching the Poor and Vulnerable in Africa through Social Safety Nets	49
Despite Improvements, Poverty and Vulnerability to Shocks Are Widespread	50
Social Safety Nets Have Been Expanding Rapidly in Africa	53

The Design of Social Safety Nets Varies across Africa	57
Social Safety Nets Are Evolving	64
Social Safety Nets Are Reaching Some, but Many of the Poor Are Not Covered	73
Some Countries Spend Heavily, but Programs Need to Be Brought to Scale and Sustained	76
Notes	81
References	82
2 Social Safety Nets Promote Poverty Reduction, Increase Resilience, and Expand Opportunities	87
Social Safety Nets Improve Equity	90
Building Resilience through Social Safety Nets	96
Increasing Opportunities through Social Safety Nets	103
Bringing Social Safety Nets to Scale	112
Annex 2A: Programs Included in the Meta-analysis	119
Annex 2B: Meta-analysis Methodology	124
Annex 2C: Partial and General Equilibrium Methodology	127
Notes	129
References	130
3 Recognizing and Leveraging Politics to Expand and Sustain Social Safety Nets	139
The Political Appetite for Adopting and Expanding Social Safety Nets	142
Program Parameters Are Political	155
Political Impacts May Favor Social Safety Net Sustainability	163
Notes	174
References	174
4 Anchoring in Strong Institutions to Expand and Sustain Social Safety Nets	183
From Frameworks to Commitments: Emerging National Strategies for Social Safety Nets	190
Rooting Social Safety Nets in Organizations for Policy Setting, Oversight, Coordination, and Management	195

Ensuring That Organizations Can Effectively Implement Social Safety Net Programs	206
Creating Incentives to Encourage Individual Actors to Deliver Results	218
Notes	222
References	223
5 Harnessing Resources to Expand and Sustain Social Safety Nets	227
Spending and Financing for Social Safety Nets: A Snapshot	228
Making Better Use of Existing Resources	231
Securing Sustainable Resources to Expand and Sustain Coverage	246
Developing a Financing Strategy for a Reliable, Effective Emergency Response	253
Notes	258
References	258
Appendixes	
A Definitions and Data Sources	265
B Estimating the Number of Programs, the Number of Beneficiaries, Coverage, and Spending	281
C The Country Context	287
D Social Safety Net Institutions and Systems	291
E Typologies of Social Safety Net Programs	305
F Coverage of Social Safety Net Programs	319
G Spending on Social Safety Net Programs	327
H Main Social Safety Net Programs, by Program Type	363
I Generosity of Social Safety Net Programs	373
J Tax Revenue	383

Foreword

In less than a decade, social safety nets in Sub-Saharan Africa have become a core part of development strategies to address extreme poverty and protect households exposed to increasing shocks from disasters such as droughts, floods, epidemics and illnesses, international price shocks, and conflict. Consider this: every country in the region now has at least one social safety net program, and African countries now spend on average 1.2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) on social safety nets—a rate slightly lower than the global average of 1.6 percent. Throughout the continent, cash transfer, public works, and school feeding programs have changed the lives of millions of vulnerable people for the better.

In Ethiopia, a productive social safety nets program is increasing food security while lowering the national poverty rate. Cash-for-work projects in Sierra Leone have increased savings of poor households and provided an incentive for income diversification. In Zambia, providing grants to households with children resulted in increased yields and higher sales of farm output, while increasing the bargaining power of women.

Since the introduction of cash transfer programs, both conditional and unconditional, a major concern has been that beneficiaries will misuse the cash and spend it on “temptation goods” such as alcohol or tobacco. Contrary to popular belief, a wealth of evidence shows that instead households use the support “productively”: by increasing food security, sending children to school, or expanding income activities. When times get tough, such programs protect households, helping to avoid selling critical assets or taking children out of school. Among Africa’s poor, a small positive shock to incomes can lift many out of poverty. However, though the number of social safety net programs has risen, coverage remains limited in Sub-Saharan Africa, with many of the poorest of the poor not covered. There is untapped potential for social safety nets to effectively address equity, raise resilience, and expand opportunities for poor and vulnerable.

What would it take? Bringing social safety nets to scale requires strong political will, technical expertise, and reliable and efficient spending, as this report highlights.

First, it is critical to understand the role of *politics* in shaping safety net programs. Such programs are appearing on political platforms and may help establish a relationship between vulnerable people and their government. The political appetite for such programs can be shaped by evidence on their effectiveness.

Second, programs need to be anchored in effective *institutions* with strong capacity and aligned incentives.

Third, scale-up will require innovative strategies to ensure *financial sustainability*. This includes a focus on ways to increase efficiency and volumes and secure new sources of financing, with an emphasis on disaster risk management.

Paying greater attention to political economy, institutional capacity, and fiscal sustainability is a key factor for bringing social safety nets to scale in Africa. This report offers a strategic vision for supporting the scale-up of social safety nets to alleviate poverty and reduce vulnerability in Africa.

Makhtar Diop
Vice-President, Africa Region
World Bank Group

Foreword

Social safety nets have arrived in Africa. The number of programs is growing. And in several countries the coverage is expanding at a rapid pace. Long gone are the days when doubters dismissed safety nets as irrelevant development policy that was good only for rich or middle-income countries. There is now a strong body of evidence from Africa and other regions which establishes that households use cash and in-kind transfers in ways that benefit children, empower women, and enable poor and vulnerable households to live better lives. Safety nets enable households to work more and more productively. These programs tackle poverty and social exclusion for the most disenfranchised people. They help connect them with basic social services. And they help households better deal with shocks, without selling their assets or jeopardizing the health, nutrition, or education of their children. The case for safety nets has been made.

Africa has become a great innovator in social safety nets, pushing the frontiers in many areas. Other regions are learning from the creative use of technology in some programs (such as targeting in Sierra Leone), or from the way programs are designed with a scalable element to better respond to shock (in Kenya for example), or from the way productive inclusion is weaved into programs. As a partner with government, the World Bank team is at the forefront of the effort to innovate and build systems.

This report emphasizes various challenges countries face when bringing their social safety nets to scale, and ensuring their sustainability. In addition to important questions related to the technical design of social safety nets and of systemic instruments, this report points to three critical areas that are essential to successful scaling up: politics, institutions, and financing. First, understanding the politics of social safety nets is critical to shift the social contract progressively and achieve strong political support for such programs. Second, strong institutions are critical to implementing programs at large scale in a transparent and professional manner, and to ensuring coordination and efficiency in their delivery. Finally, bringing safety nets to scale, and reliably keeping them at such

scale over time, requires innovative strategies to increase resources and to ensure their timely availability, including in the context of shocks and emergencies.

This broader focus on issues that go beyond technical considerations is relevant more generally—for regions beyond Africa and for other elements of social protection beyond social safety nets more broadly.

Michał Rutkowski

Senior Director and Head of Global Practice
Social Protection and Jobs
World Bank Group

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About the Authors and Contributors

Colin Andrews is a Senior Economist in the Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice at the World Bank. He has over 10 years of experience working in social protection across Africa and South Asia and at the global policy level. Colin has been working on issues related to social safety net design, service delivery, and sector-related links with agriculture, education, and health. He has most recently been involved in issues in social protection financing, donor harmonization, and impact evaluation. He has published widely and has managed several lending operations in the Africa Region. Prior to joining the World Bank, he worked at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, at the European Commission, and within international nongovernmental organizations. He received his master's degree in Economics from Trinity College, Dublin.

Kathleen Beegle is a Lead Economist in the World Bank's Africa Region. Based in Accra, she coordinates country programs in Ghana, Liberia, and Sierra Leone in education, health, poverty, social protection, gender, and jobs. She coauthored the 2016 World Bank regional study *Poverty in a Rising Africa*. She was Deputy Director of *World Development Report 2013*, on jobs. She was in the World Bank Research Group for over a decade, where her research focused on poverty, labor, and economic shocks. She was also a lead member of the World Bank Living Standards Measurement Study team; she led in the design and implementation of national household surveys for poverty and policy analysis, as well as methodological studies on survey design. Before joining the World Bank Research Group, she worked at RAND Corporation. Kathleen holds a PhD in Economics from Michigan State University.

Thomas Bossuroy is an Economist at the World Bank, where he works primarily on social safety nets and employment programs among the poor in West Africa. In addition to managing operations in Sahel countries, Benin, Nigeria, and Togo, he leads a range of analytical activities and experiments on employment and in livelihoods programs. In particular, he is managing several impact evaluations of skills development programs, productive inclusion strategies,

and school feeding programs. His research also focuses on innovative service delivery strategies in health care, with a focus on combating tuberculosis in India. Prior to joining the World Bank, Thomas was a research fellow at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, where he evaluated national business development programs for the poor and vulnerable. He started his career as Executive Director of J-PAL South Asia, based in Chennai, India, where he oversaw randomized controlled trials and managed a growing organization with presence across India. After dedicating his doctoral research to the dynamics of social and political structures in Africa, Thomas received a PhD in Economics from the Paris School of Economics.

Lucilla Maria Bruni is an Economist in the World Bank's Social Protection Global Practice. Lucilla focuses on southern Africa, for which she leads a portfolio of operational and analytical activities related to social assistance, demographics, and labor markets. She also leads a series of training exercises on impact evaluation for government officers in Poland. In her previous assignments at the World Bank, Lucilla worked on social protection projects in East Asia and the Pacific and was on a field assignment in Cambodia. Prior to her work at the World Bank, Lucilla did research on poverty and inequality in Guatemala and was an economics consultant in London. Lucilla holds a Master of Public Administration in International Development from Harvard University and an M.Sc. and B.Sc. from the London School of Economics.

Sarah Coll-Black is a Senior Social Protection Specialist in the Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice at the World Bank. She has over 10 years of experience working on social protection in Africa, managing the design and delivery of safety nets, including links to disaster risk management and humanitarian response, risk financing, and youth employment. She coauthored the World Bank's Social Protection Strategy for Africa (2012–22) and led the World Bank's support to the Productive Safety Net Program in Ethiopia; she is currently focusing on West Africa. Prior to joining the World Bank, she worked in the Philippines with international organizations to extend basic services to the poorest people in Asia and the Pacific. She holds an MPhil from the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, and an Economics degree from Dalhousie University.

Aline Coudouel is a Lead Economist with the World Bank, where she currently focuses on social assistance, social insurance, and labor markets in West Africa (especially Cabo Verde, Mauritania, and Senegal) after spending a few years working in Latin America and the Caribbean (Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama). Previously, she was part of the poverty team at the World Bank, working on debt relief and poverty reduction

strategies and as a member of the team that defined and promoted the poverty and social impact analysis of policies. She was a coauthor of the flagship *World Development Report 2012*, on gender equality and development, which sought to explain the driving forces behind gender equality and its effect on economic growth and helped to enhance the understanding of the role of public action in promoting this important issue. Prior to joining the Bank, she worked as a researcher for the United Nations Children's Fund, where she focused on the welfare of children and women in Europe and Central Asia. Aline holds a PhD in Economics from the European University Institute in San Domenico di Fiesole, Italy.

Melis Guven is a Senior Social Protection Economist in the World Bank's Africa Region. Melis focuses on safety nets and pensions and is the focal point and technical lead on pensions in the region. She is currently responsible for the social protection and labor programs of the World Bank in Botswana, Mauritius, and Seychelles. Prior to joining the Africa Region, she worked on a broad range of pension and safety net issues in Albania, Poland, Romania, and Turkey. Previously, Melis worked for the Turkish government (the Turkish Treasury) and was a core member of the health and pension reform team in Turkey. As a result, she has in-depth understanding of decision making and prioritization in governments.

Maddalena Honorati is a Senior Economist who joined the team in the Europe and Central Asia Region after working in the unit for strategy and operations and with teams in Africa within the Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice. Her areas of experience include social safety nets, labor market programs, skills, social protection systems, and methodological studies on household survey and administrative data collection for social protection. Before joining the Social Protection team in 2009, she worked for the Development Research Group at the World Bank on firm productivity, determinants of informality, and the impact of investment climate regulations on firm performance. Recently, her research interest has focused on the design and evaluation of social safety nets and active labor market programs as well as the measurement of social protection system performance. Maddalena holds a PhD in Economics from Bocconi University in Milan, Italy, and an MSc from Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona, Spain. She has supported the operational implementation of programs in Albania, Armenia, Ecuador, Ghana, Kenya, and the Philippines.

Allan Hsiao is a PhD candidate in Economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where his research focuses on health care systems in Asia. His current research has involved studies on the rapid expansion of health care

infrastructure in Indonesia, where residents benefit from a multilayered system of hospitals, clinics, and smaller facilities that has greatly enhanced access to health care over the last few decades. Allan's work applies frontier methods from industrial organization and development economics to draw policy prescriptions relevant to developing countries confronting rising health care needs under significant resource constraints. Other projects have focused on the impacts of large-scale school construction on local labor markets in Indonesia and rural-to-urban migration in China. He has contributed to the medical literature on cardiovascular outcomes and the global burden of disease. Prior to attending the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, he received an MPhil in Economics from the University of Oxford and a bachelor's degree in Economics from Harvard College.

Victoria Monchuk is a Senior Economist at the World Bank, where her fields of interest include social protection and cross-sectoral human development issues. Her work in the Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice has included supporting governments in Central and West Africa in building safety net systems and cash transfer programs. She is currently managing a decentralized service delivery program that seeks to expand equitable access to quality basic services in Ethiopia. She has also been involved in a number of assessments and evaluations of cash transfer, public works, and skills development programs. Previously, she was employed in the Fiscal Affairs Department of the International Monetary Fund, where she was engaged in analytical work on the efficiency of public expenditure on public health and education. Her research has focused on the impact of child labor and school achievement in Latin America.

Emma Monsalve is a Consultant in the World Bank's Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice in Africa. She joined the Bank in 2014 and worked with the Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice and the Poverty and Equity Global Practice in the Latin America and Caribbean Region. Before joining the Bank, she worked with the Inter-American Development Bank and the Central Bank of Colombia. She has developed technical and analytical expertise on a wide array of topics, including social protection and labor, poverty, education, health, and fiscal policy. In her most recent work at the World Bank, she has focused on assessing the efficiency and redistributive incidence of social spending in several countries in the Africa Region and the Latin America and the Caribbean Region and in designing and implementing poverty diagnostics. She has made numerous contributions to analytical work, systematic country diagnostics, country dialogue, lending operations, and the ASPIRE and Latin America and Caribbean Region Equity Lab databases. She holds a master's in Applied

Economics from Johns Hopkins University and a bachelor's in Economics from the University of Antioquia in Colombia.

Laura Ralston is an Economist in the Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice at the World Bank, where she works on social insurance, human development, and labor markets. She has an interest in development in fragile and conflict-affected environments and works on Social Protection and Jobs projects in several fragile countries in Africa. She has contributed to the work of the World Bank's Fragility, Conflict, and Violence Group by tracking the progress and identifying challenges in projects and programs in these environments. She is seeking to develop cooperative approaches within the World Bank and with external partners, with a focus on innovation and the sharing of ideas. Toward these goals, she has coordinated impact evaluations across sectors in Africa, East Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and South Asia and has performed conflict and fragility analysis and monitoring in Africa and the Middle East. Laura received her PhD in Empirical Applied Microeconomics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Her work there involved research on the determinants of conflict and violence using a wide range of methodologies, including quasi-experimental regression analysis, laboratory experiments, geospatial data science, and statistical learning.

Judith Sandford is a Social Protection and Food Security Specialist with 20 years of experience, currently working as an independent consultant. She has supported the design and implementation of government-led interventions and programs of nongovernmental organizations in Sub-Saharan Africa. Her experience includes long-term support for the Productive Safety Net Program in Ethiopia (PSNP) and the National Safety Net Program (NSNP) in Kenya.

Abbreviations

ASPIRE	Atlas of Social Protection Indicators of Resilience and Equity (database)
GDP	gross domestic product
HIV/AIDS	human immunodeficiency virus and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
HSNP	Hunger Safety Net Program (Kenya)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LEAP	Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty Program (Ghana)
MASAF PWP	Malawi Social Action Fund Public Works Program
NGO	nongovernmental organization
OVC Program	Orphans and Vulnerable Children Program (Kenya)
PIU	project implementation unit
PNBSF	Programme National de Bourses de Sécurité Familiale (National Program of Family Security Transfers) (Senegal)
PSNP	Productive Safety Net Program (Ethiopia)
PSSN	Productive Social Safety Net (Tanzania)
SCTP	Social Cash Transfer Program (Malawi)
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VUP	Vision 2020 Umurenge Program (Rwanda)
WDI	World Development Indicators (World Bank)

All dollar amounts are U.S. dollars, unless otherwise noted.

Realizing the Full Potential of Social Safety Nets in Africa

Despite economic growth and improvements in many dimensions of welfare, poverty remains a pervasive and complex phenomenon in Sub-Saharan Africa (Africa hereafter). Approximately two people in five live in poverty, and, because of shocks, many others are vulnerable to falling into poverty. Part of the agenda to tackle poverty in Africa in recent years has been the launch of social safety net programs. Largely absent from the continent until the early 2000s, social safety nets are now included in development strategies in most countries in Africa. The number of social safety net programs has expanded greatly. In several countries, the expansion has arisen concomitantly with significant investment in core instruments of national social safety net systems—such as targeting systems, social registries, and payment mechanisms—that have progressively strengthened the systems and raised their efficiency.

The shift in social policy toward social safety nets reflects a progressive evolution in the understanding of the role that social safety nets can play in the fight against poverty and vulnerability. Evidence shows that these programs can contribute significantly and efficiently to reducing poverty, building resilience, and boosting opportunities among the poorest.

For the full potential of social safety nets to be realized in addressing equity, resilience, and the opportunities available to poor and vulnerable populations in Africa, programs need to be brought to scale and sustained. This involves solving a series of technical issues to identify the parameters, tools, and processes that can deliver maximum benefit to the poor and the vulnerable. However, at least as important, this report argues, is the series of decisive shifts that must occur in three critical areas—political, institutional, and fiscal—as follows:

- First, the political processes that shape the extent and nature of social policy need to be recognized and engaged. This can be done by stimulating the political appetite for social safety nets, choosing politically appropriate

parameters, and harnessing the political impacts of social safety nets to promote sustainability.

- Second, social safety net programs must be anchored in strong institutional arrangements to support their expansion, especially because programs are now more frequently implemented through national channels. Expansion requires anchoring in laws and policies, mechanisms for coordination and oversight, and arrangements for program management and delivery.
- Third, in most countries, the level and predictability of the resources devoted to the sector must be expanded so social safety nets can reach the desirable scale. This can be achieved through greater efficiency, more resources, newer sources of financing, and a greater ability to respond effectively to shocks.

This report first presents a snapshot of social safety nets in Africa and the mounting evidence for the effectiveness of these programs in promoting the well-being and productive inclusion of the poorest and most vulnerable. It then focuses on the three areas highlighted above: the political, institutional, and fiscal aspects. It does not systematically discuss technical aspects involved in designing social safety nets (see Grosh et al. 2008 for a thorough treatment). Rather, the report highlights the implications that political, institutional, and fiscal aspects have for program choice and design. It argues that these considerations are crucial to ensuring success in raising social safety nets to scale in Africa and maintaining adequate support. Ignoring these areas could lead to technically sound, but practically impossible, choices and designs.

Reaching the Poor and Vulnerable in Africa through Social Safety Nets (Chapter 1)

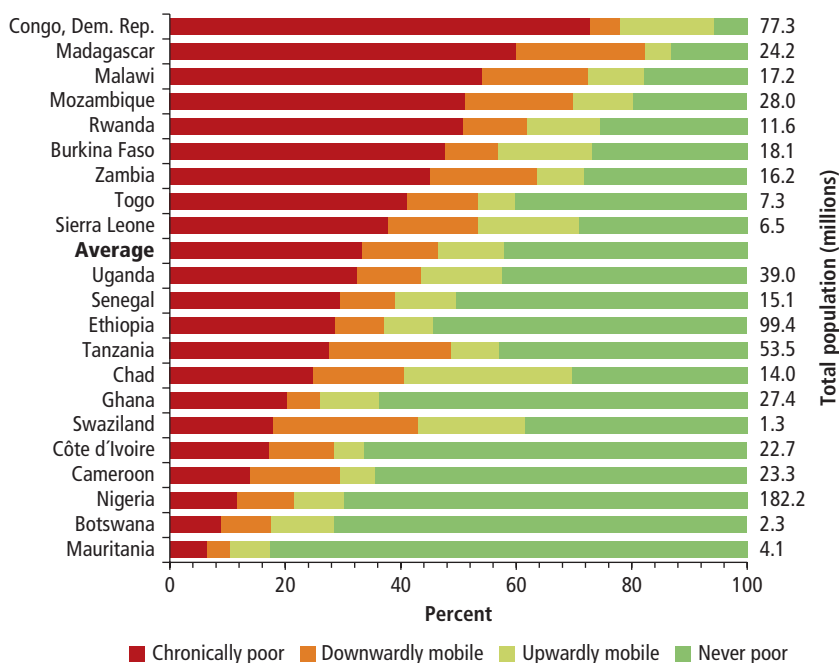
Despite Improvements, Poverty and Vulnerability to Shocks Are Widespread

Poverty rates have been falling in Africa. The share of the poor—people living on less than \$1.90 a day—declined from 57 percent in 1990 to 41 percent in 2013. However, the decline was not sufficiently rapid to allow Africa to reach the Millennium Development Goal of cutting the poverty rate in half by 2015. Moreover, the number of the poor rose from about 280 million people in 1990 to 390 million people in 2013 because of high population growth. Poverty will remain a challenge in Africa even if macroeconomic growth exceeds expectations. Under a range of economic growth assumptions, global poverty will become increasingly concentrated in Africa and in conflict-affected states (Chandy, Ledlie, and Penciakova 2013; Ravallion 2013; World Bank 2015).

Poverty is not captured solely by monetary measures. Progress has also been made in Africa in nonmonetary well-being. But the rate of progress is leveling off in some places, and there has been an uptick in violent events. The region shows the worst outcomes relative to other regions on most human development indicators. One primary-school-age child in five is not in school, and children in poor households are the least likely to be in school. More than a third of young children are malnourished (appendix table C.1).

Poverty is not a static condition. Among Africa's poor, a small positive shock to incomes could lift many out of poverty, but a small negative shock could drive as many of the vulnerable into poverty. In Africa, two poor households in five are among the transient poor; that is, they are moving into or out of poverty as income fluctuates and they become exposed to shocks (figure O.1).

Figure O.1 Poverty Is Both Chronic and Transient



Source: Dang and Dabalen 2017.

Note: Poverty statistics refer to the latest household survey year for each country. The "chronically poor" category includes households that were poor in both periods of the analysis; "downwardly mobile" refers to households that fell into poverty in the second period; "upwardly mobile" includes those who were poor in the first period but not poor in the second period; and "never poor" includes households that were nonpoor in both periods.

Many households in Africa are vulnerable to shocks such as illnesses, weather shocks, and conflict. The nature of shocks is evolving and presenting new challenges. As of mid-2016, Africa accounted for 30 percent of the displaced population worldwide, which represents about 20 million people. Of the top 20 countries in the world in terms of hosting displaced populations, eight are in Africa. Climate change is another obstacle to eradicating poverty in Africa (appendix tables A.1 and C.1). Households in drylands are more likely to be poor than households in other areas (Cervigni and Morris 2016; Hallegatte et al. 2016).

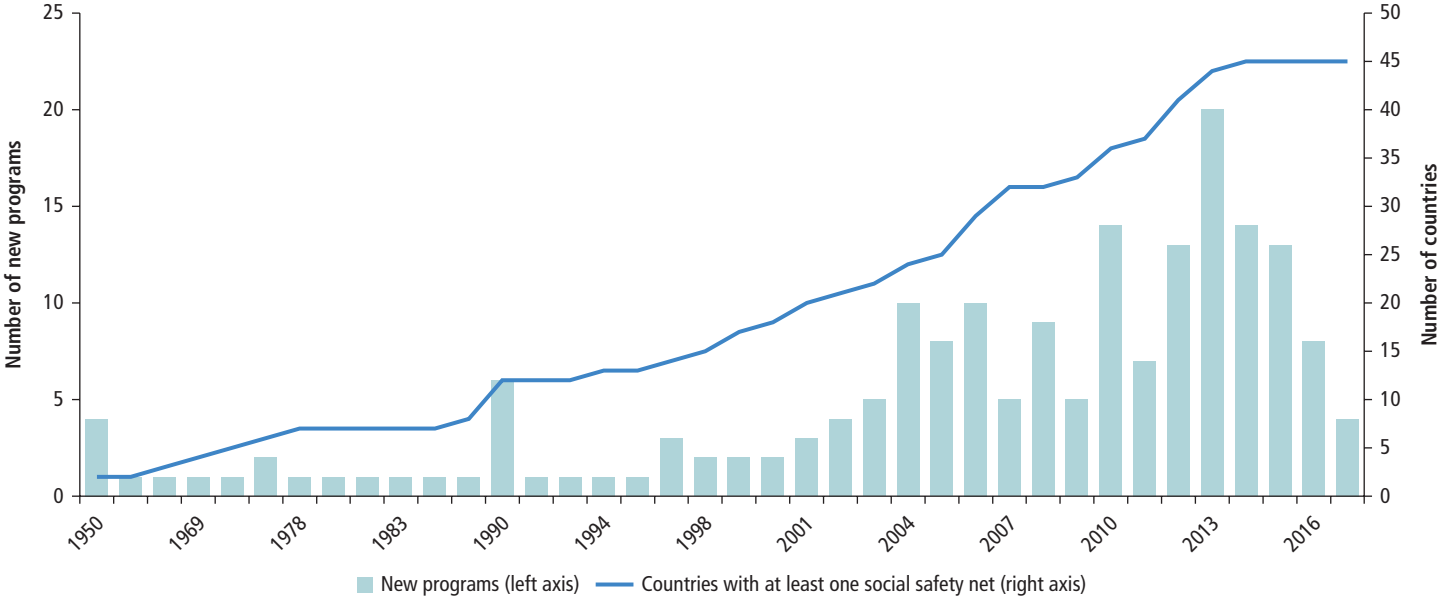
Social Safety Nets Have Been Expanding Rapidly in Africa

Most African countries have recently established social safety net programs as part of a broader strategy to assist the poor and protect the vulnerable (appendix table D.1). In this report, social safety nets—also sometimes called social assistance programs—are defined as noncontributory benefits, provided either in cash or in kind, which are intended to support the poor or the vulnerable. They are a component of the larger social protection system that also includes contributory social insurance, such as pensions and health insurance, as well as labor market policies and programs, and some of the processes analyzed in this report focus more broadly on social protection systems. Programs such as universal child grants or social pensions are included, as they are noncontributory and focus on groups perceived as vulnerable. The definition in this report also includes measures that facilitate access to basic services, such as health care, education, and housing, through targeted fee waivers, scholarships, and lump sum grants to promote productive inclusion. Consumer price subsidies, including energy and food subsidies, are not considered social safety net initiatives in this report. The objectives of social safety nets differ and may range from reducing monetary poverty, food insecurity, and vulnerabilities (such as old age, disability, exposure to natural disasters, and conflict situations) to improving access to basic services among the poor, and to promoting productive inclusion for the poorest.

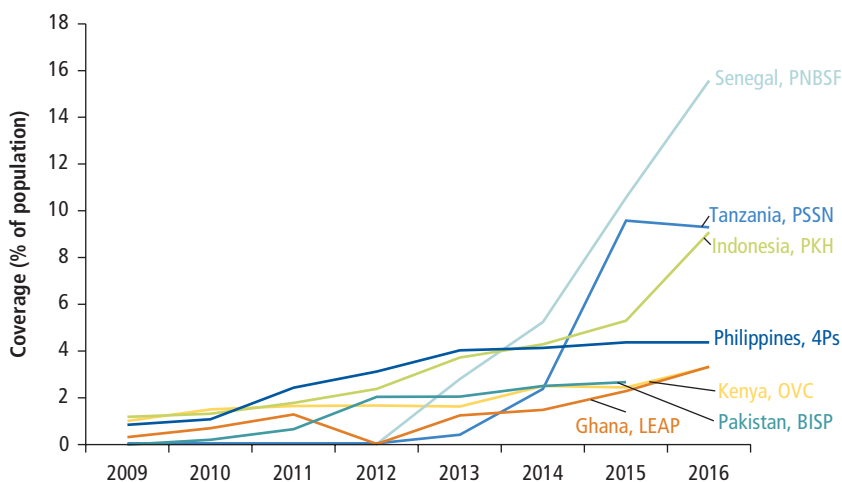
The average number of new social safety net programs launched in Africa each year rose from 7 in 2001–09 to 14 in 2010–15 (figure O.2). Every African country has at least one social safety net program. The average number of programs per country is 15, ranging from 2 in the Republic of Congo and Gabon to 56 in Burkina Faso and 54 in Chad (appendix tables E.1 and E.2). This trend has also been a global one. By 2015, every country in the world was implementing at least one social safety net program.

There are success stories of rapid expansion in the region that are unique in the developing world (such as in Ghana, Kenya, Senegal, and Tanzania; see figure O.3). However, these remain exceptions in the region, and most programs are implemented on a much smaller scale.

Figure 0.2 More Social Safety Net Programs Have Been Launched in Recent Years



Source: ASPIRE (Atlas of Social Protection Indicators of Resilience and Equity) (database), Administrative data, World Bank, Washington, DC, <http://www.worldbank.org/aspire>.
Note: This figure considers regular programs (not emergency support programs) that are still being implemented and for which information on the year of the launch is available.

Figure 0.3 Flagship Programs in Africa Are among the Most Rapidly Growing

Source: ASPIRE (Atlas of Social Protection Indicators of Resilience and Equity) (database), Administrative data, World Bank, Washington, DC, <http://www.worldbank.org/aspire>.

Note: 4Ps = Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program; BISP = Benazir Income Support Program; LEAP = Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty; OVC = Orphans and Vulnerable Children; PKH = Program Keluarga Harapan; PNBSF = Programme National de Bourses de Sécurité Familiale; PSSN = Productive Social Safety Net Program.

As programs are created and grow, many countries are also investing in systems to raise efficiency and reduce program duplication. Delivery platforms—such as social registries, interoperable management information systems, and shared payment systems—allow administrative cost savings and facilitate planning and coordination. Social registries are currently being used in 26 countries and are being developed in an additional 16 countries (appendix table D.2). These social registries are systems that identify poor and vulnerable households in a country or region and collect information on socioeconomic situations, thereby providing governments and partners with a central mechanism to identify potential program beneficiaries (Karippacheril, Leite, and Lindert 2017). The stage of development differs, and coverage ranges from 0.1 and 0.3 percent of the population in Zambia and Mozambique; and to 89 and 52 percent of the population in Rwanda and Lesotho, respectively.

The expanding adoption of social safety nets is paralleled by the growing number of national strategies and policies. By 2017, 32 African countries had established national social protection strategies or policies, which include social safety nets as a core pillar, and draft strategies are in the approval process in another 7 countries (appendix table D.1).

The Design of Social Safety Nets Varies across Africa

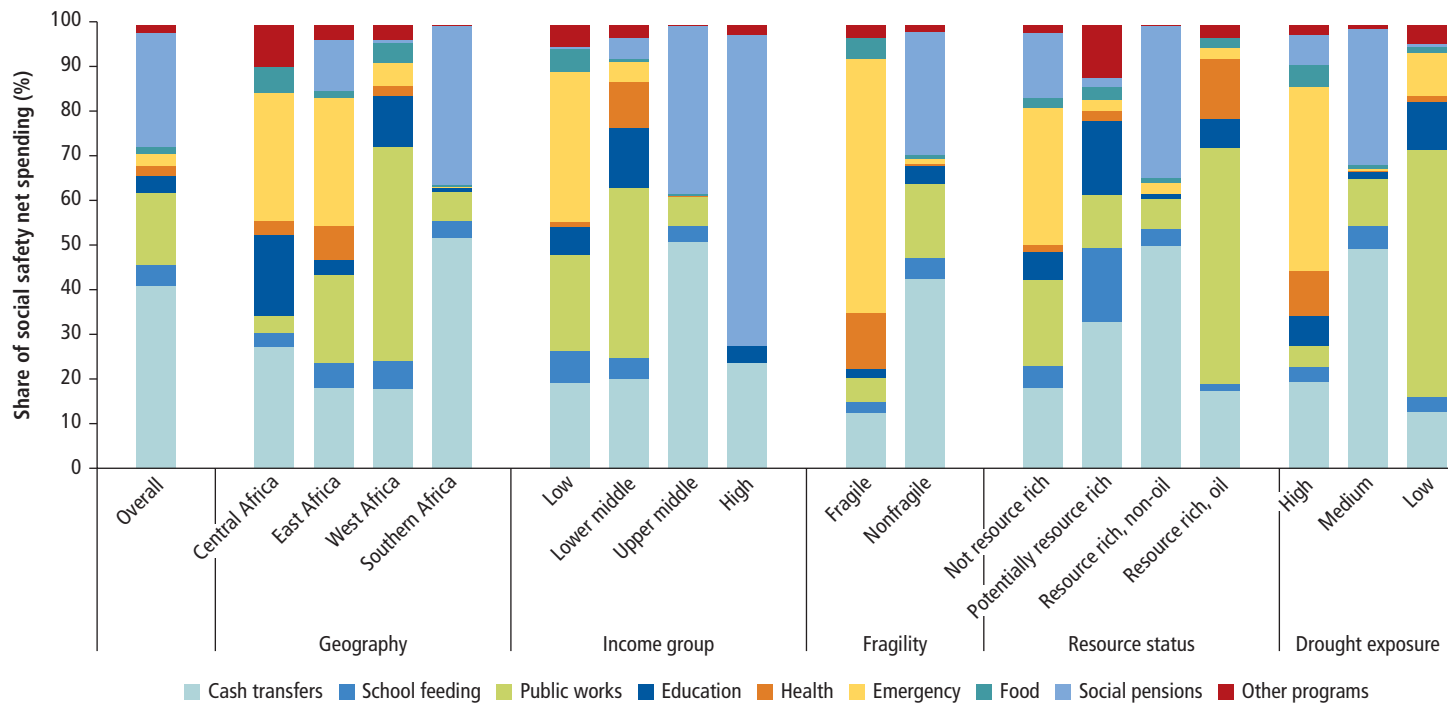
Figure O.4 highlights the variety in design across the region, as well as patterns observed among groups of countries depending on geographic location, income, fragility, and drought exposure. Cash transfer programs are implemented in almost all countries (46), as well as public works programs (33) and school feeding programs (28) (appendix table E.1). Overall, cash transfers account for 41 percent of total spending, and this share is growing. Social pensions are more prevalent in upper-middle- and high-income countries and in Southern Africa. Public works programs exist in almost all low-income countries and fragile states, especially in West Africa, but are largely absent in middle- and high-income countries. In Central Africa and fragile states, social safety nets are widely used as responses to shocks, and emergency and food-based programs are the most common types of programs.

Social Safety Nets Are Evolving

As programs have grown in number and size, program design features have also evolved. First, there has been a shift toward more use of cash in social safety nets. Second, social safety nets are playing an expanding role in country responses to climate change and human-made shocks. Third, an increasing number of programs are focusing on fostering the productive capacity and resilience of beneficiary households. Similarly, there has been a greater concentration on promoting human capital development, often associated with conditional programs. Because of urbanization and the rising number of the urban poor, recent years have witnessed an increase in social safety nets in urban areas. Finally, countries have gradually been emphasizing the establishment of tools and systems to boost program efficiency and coordination.

Social Safety Nets Are Reaching Some, but Many of the Poor Are Not Covered

The programs with the greatest coverage of age-relevant populations are school feeding and fee waiver programs. With a few exceptions, richer countries tend to run larger programs. The majority of social safety nets in Africa are directly or indirectly targeted to children because they assist households with children. Of all programs, 29 percent directly target children through nutrition interventions, benefits aimed at orphans and other vulnerable children, school feeding programs, the provision of school supplies, and education benefits or fee waivers (appendix table E.3). As a result, the average coverage of children is 15 percent in Africa (appendix table F.2). (Coverages rates of the elderly are around 100 percent in countries with universal old-age social pensions, such as Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia, Seychelles, and Swaziland; appendix table F.1.)

Figure 0.4 The Composition of Social Safety Net Portfolios Is Diverse

Source: ASPIRE (Atlas of Social Protection Indicators of Resilience and Equity) (database), Administrative data, World Bank, Washington, DC, <http://www.worldbank.org/aspire>.

Note: The figure presents the distribution of all resources deployed by all countries in each group across different program categories. See appendix table G.6.

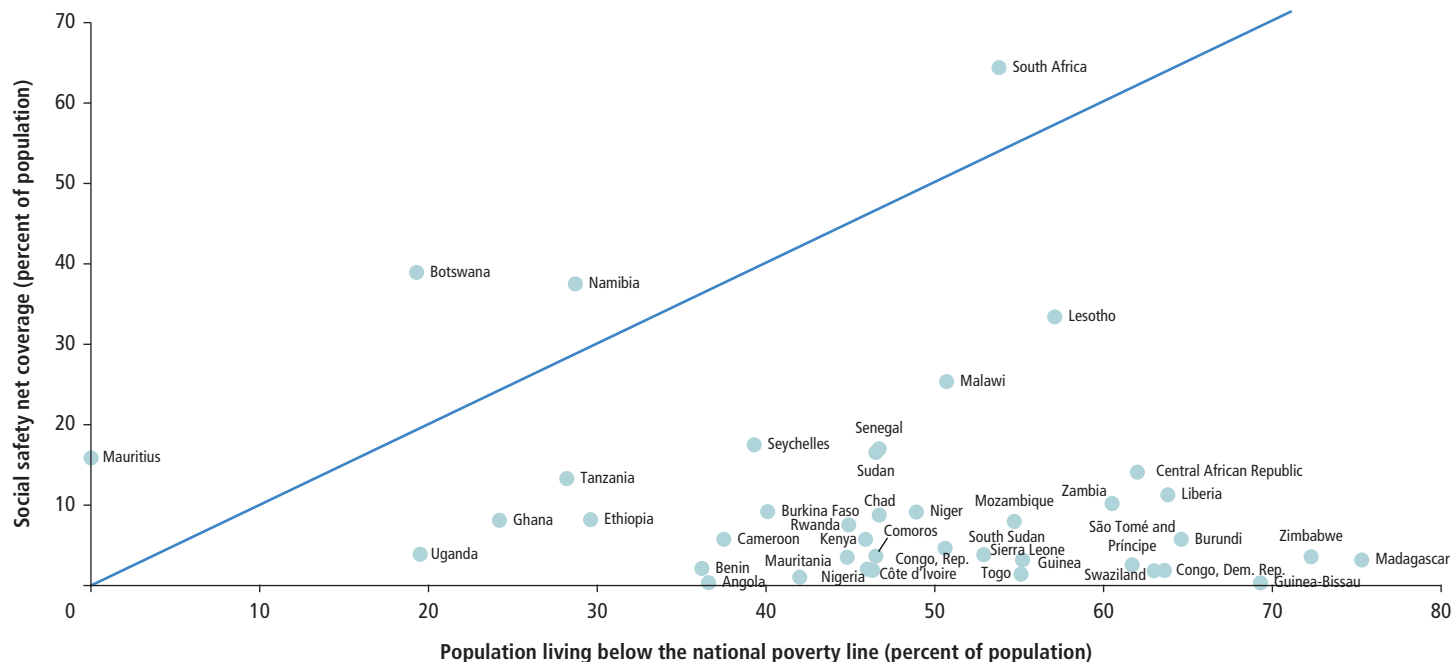
Though the number of social safety net programs has risen, coverage is often limited. On average, coverage is 10 percent of the African population (appendix tables F.1 and F.2). Poverty rates are higher than coverage rates in most countries (figure O.5). So, even if all existing social safety nets were perfectly targeted to the poor, not all poor households would be reached at the current scale of programs (in addition, benefits are typically low compared to needs). Meanwhile, some programs do not exclusively target the poor, but have broader objectives, such as universal old-age social pensions, school lunch programs for all primary-school students, scholarships for all students in tertiary education, or the targeting of specific categories in the population deemed vulnerable without necessarily taking population welfare characteristics into account.

Notwithstanding the issue of program objectives, the benefit incidence of selected programs that target on the basis of welfare or vulnerability are generally pro-poor, and the performance of programs in Africa is in line with international experience. For instance, more than 60 percent of the households benefiting from the South Africa Child Support Grants program belong to the poorest two quintiles of the national consumption distribution, and over 60 percent of the beneficiaries of the Malawi Social Action Fund are counted among the poor (chapter 1). However, a certain share of resources goes to richer households. Some limitations in targeting are technical: it is difficult and costly to assess the welfare status of households effectively and dynamically. However, the decision to target particular groups is also a political one. Indeed, selecting eligible groups is sometimes driven by the need to generate support among the population and decision makers for social safety net programs (chapter 3).

Low coverage rates are exacerbated by the fact that many programs are small or temporary initiatives implemented in isolation, in narrow geographical areas, or among discrete population groups. Program duplication also occurs, often within a weak institutional environment. This is the situation in Uganda and Zimbabwe, for instance, which implement 39 and 29 social safety net programs, respectively (appendix table E.1). Insufficient coordination among the development partners that often fund such programs exacerbates fragmentation and inefficiencies. Efforts to consolidate and rationalize programs are on the policy agendas of many countries, including the need to focus on a strong institutional framework for social safety nets (chapter 4).

Benefit amounts in social safety net programs are low relative to needs in low-income countries in the region. The highest benefits are usually offered through old-age social pensions or public works, followed by cash transfer programs. Average cash transfers correspond to 10 percent of the national poverty line in low-income countries, versus 57 percent for public works (see chapter 1, table 1.3 and appendix table I.1, for data and assumptions). Greater efficiency in implementation would help support a rise in the value of benefits, but elevating

Figure 0.5 Social Safety Net Coverage Is Not Proportionate to the Extent of Poverty



Source: ASPIRE (Atlas of Social Protection Indicators of Resilience and Equity) (database), Administrative data, World Bank, Washington, DC, <http://www.worldbank.org/aspire>

Note: See methodology in appendixes B.2 and B.3. Social safety net coverage rates are approximated by summing the number of direct and indirect beneficiaries of cash transfers, food-based transfers, and public works programs only. The beneficiaries of the other six program types (social pensions, school feeding, emergency programs, health care and education fee waivers, and other programs) are not included because their beneficiaries are more likely to overlap with those in other programs, which would result in overestimated coverage rates. For more details see appendix tables C.1 and F.1.

these programs to scale would also require a focus on sustainable financing for social safety nets (chapter 5).

Some Countries Spend Heavily, but Programs Must Be Brought to Scale and Sustained

While African countries spend an average 1.2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) on social safety nets (equivalent to 4.8 percent of total government expenditures), government commitment varies greatly across countries at similar income levels. The average spending in the developing world is comparable, at 1.6 percent of GDP, but the fiscal needs in Africa are greater given the depth of poverty.

Notwithstanding the need to raise domestic resources and grow the economy, government spending on other initiatives that have objectives similar to social safety nets can be large. Spending on energy subsidies, for example, is considerable in some countries. In Central Africa, it is more than three times the spending on social safety nets (chapter 1, figure 1.12 and appendix table G.1). Because these subsidies benefit all consumers and because richer households consume larger quantities of energy, such subsidies are regressive. This points to the political considerations that underpin government spending choices (chapter 3) and to the potential efficiency gains from reallocation.

In many countries, the current stock of social safety net programs lacks fiscal sustainability. Development partners fund more than half the social safety net financing in the majority of African countries. There are large variations, though, and the governments of Angola, Botswana, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritania, Mauritius, Senegal, Seychelles, and Sudan finance over 60 percent of their social safety net spending. Humanitarian aid represents the main source of funding in emergency situations, and the role of development partners is critical in many low-income and fragile contexts.

Social Safety Nets Promote Poverty Reduction, Increase Resilience, and Expand Opportunities (Chapter 2)

In parallel with the expansion of social safety net projects in the region, there has also been growing evidence on the impacts of social safety nets on equity (such as through poverty reduction and food security), resilience, and opportunities among the poor and vulnerable. The depth of recent evidence serves as a case for investment in social safety nets, for the effective design of programs, and for bringing programs to scale. A meta-analysis has been undertaken to pool evidence systematically across available studies and to facilitate a robust and consistent comparison of the impacts on key outcomes.

Social Safety Nets Improve Equity

The equity objective of social safety nets—to ensure that the most vulnerable and poorest households are able to reach a minimum level of consumption and cover their basic needs—is often central in low-income settings where poverty is most severe. Social safety nets have been shown to boost consumption and thereby lower poverty. Household consumption rises by an average \$0.74 for each \$1.00 transferred (figure O.6). In Ethiopia in 2011, the direct effect of transfers to rural households through the Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) and food aid has been estimated as equivalent to a reduction of 1.6 percentage points in the national poverty rate. If social safety nets are brought to scale, simulation scenarios show that average transfers of \$50 a month can reduce the poverty rate by up to 40 percent.

Households do not spend all the cash from social safety nets on consumables; they allocate some to productive investments, lumpy expenditures such as school fees, and savings. The vast majority of evidence shows that households do not use transfers on temptation goods, such as alcohol or tobacco.

Cash from social safety nets can also stimulate the demand for retail goods, services, and agricultural goods in local economies. Through such spillovers, nonbeneficiaries can also gain. For each \$1 transferred to beneficiaries, nonbeneficiaries can experience estimated income increases of \$0.30 or more. Together with the impacts on beneficiaries, these additional income effects lead to local economy multipliers of 1.08 to 1.84; that is, each dollar transferred through a social safety net to a beneficiary household is projected to add more than a dollar to the local economy (Taylor, Thome, and Filipinski 2014; Taylor et al. 2013, 2014; Thome et al. 2014a, 2014b).

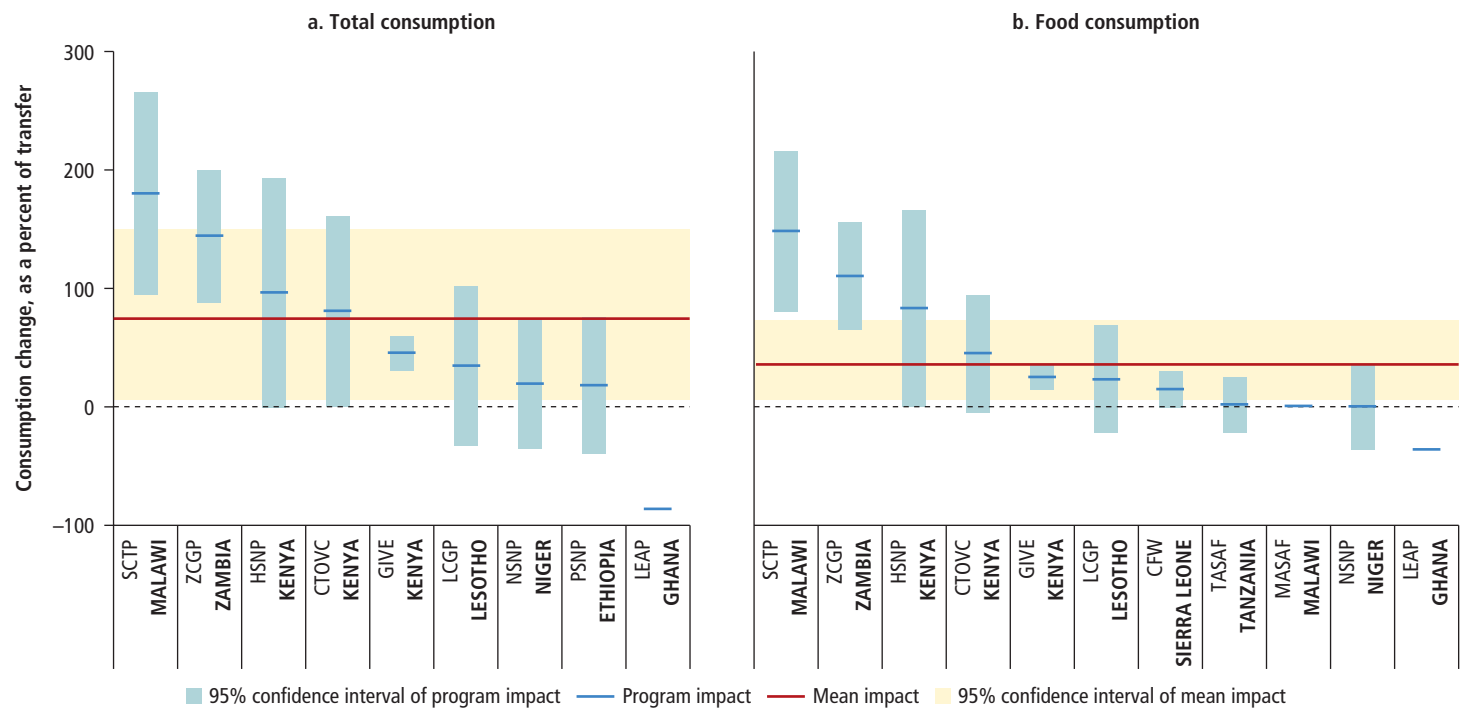
Building Resilience through Social Safety Nets

Social safety nets can help build household resilience to shocks. If poor households are able to rely on regular support from safety nets, they can avoid resorting to costly and often irreversible coping strategies, such as selling their most productive assets at deflated prices or taking children out of school.

Social safety net programs also help boost savings and foster the inclusion of beneficiaries in local community networks. Beneficiary households are between 4 and 20 percentage points more likely to be saving relative to comparable nonbeneficiary households. Given the initial low savings rate among such households, this implies an expansion by a factor of almost two in the incidence of savings. Evaluations suggest that households are also using transfers to reduce borrowing and indebtedness. Social safety net programs do not appear to crowd out private transfers (from family and friends), which can be a critical lifeline for poor families.

There is encouraging evidence suggesting that social safety net transfers can successfully boost investment in productive assets, especially livestock holdings,

Figure 0.6 Consumption Increases Because of Social Safety Nets



Source: Based on the meta-analysis described in chapter 2.

which represent an alternate form of savings. For example, livestock ownership rose an average of 34 percent across seven programs reporting on this outcome.

Adverse coping strategies, including the use of child labor, can also be avoided if households have access to social safety nets. Programs specifically targeted at children appear to reduce child labor the most, and strong communication strategies advocating for the rights and well-being of children may help generate these results.

Increasing Opportunities through Social Safety Nets

By fostering opportunities, including through investment in human capital and productive activities, social safety nets grow the incomes of poor households now and for the benefit of the next generation.

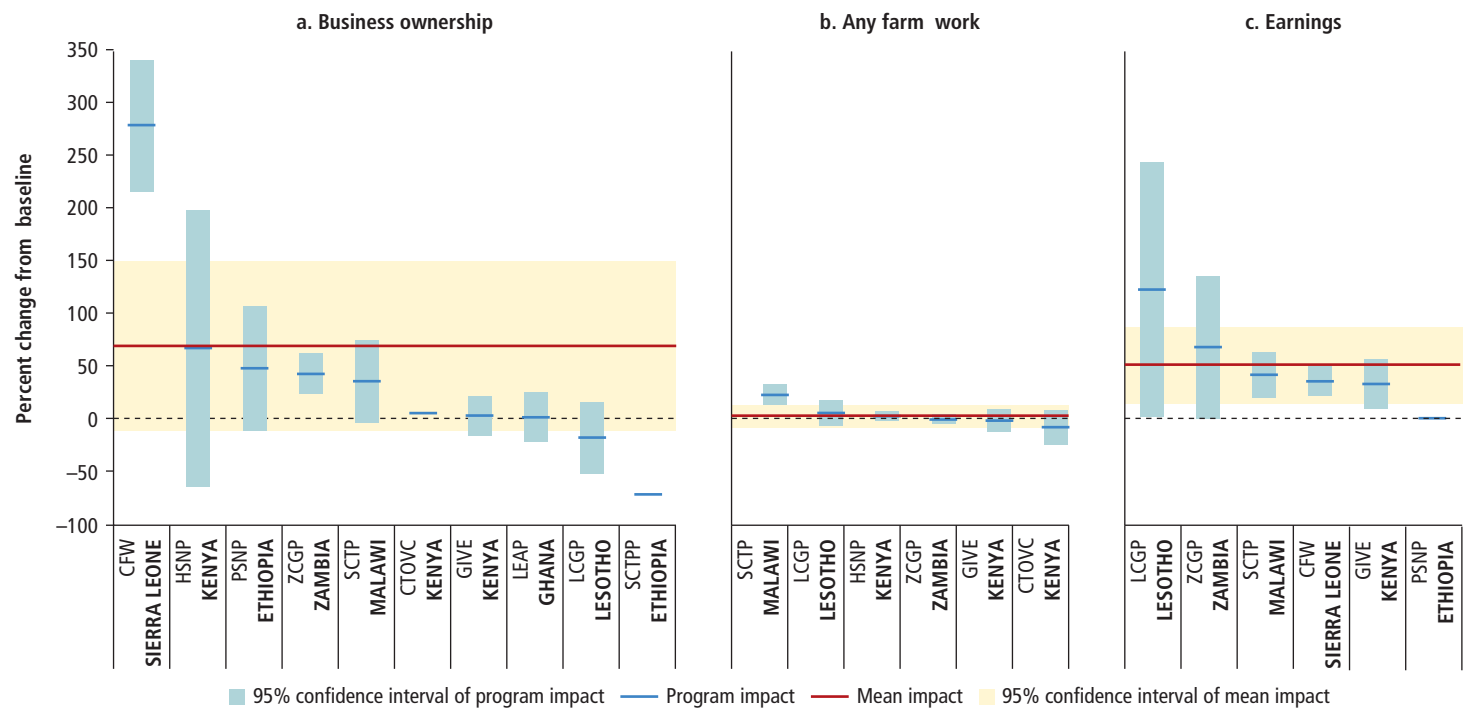
Social safety nets promote investments in children's education. In Africa, programs lead to an average 6 percent rise in school attendance and a 7 percent improvement in enrollments relative to baseline rates. These impacts are modest and reflect the high rates of lower-primary enrollment prior to program implementation. Improvements are especially pronounced in upper-primary and secondary school, where the enrollment is lower, though the barriers are also greater. The improvements are consistent with decreased child labor and increases in expenditures on schooling, such as the purchase of uniforms and school supplies, as well as fee payments. There is a lack of evidence on the impacts of social safety nets on skills and learning.

The impact of social safety nets on health care is limited. Several studies report on this outcome, but no significant average effect has been found, reflecting both the demand and supply side constraints and the speed at which program impacts can be realized. Where promising results emerge, they are often related to investments in younger infants, for example, child growth monitoring under South Africa's Child Support Grant Program or exclusive breastfeeding in Niger's Safety Net Project. In both health care and education, simulations indicate that social safety nets will have the largest impact on the poorest households that are most likely to otherwise miss out.

The transformative potential of social safety nets to boost education and health care outcomes hinges on the adequacy of public services. To realize gains, the quantity and quality of basic services must be improved. This is also a principle in agriculture and in water and sanitation.

Social safety net transfers are not handouts. Rather, they promote longer-term opportunities for productive inclusion (figure O.7). The limited evidence shows that the programs typically result in more income opportunities, rather than more idleness. Beneficiaries launch or expand business activities and invest in productive assets, while avoiding labor that may be damaging to their health. More analysis is needed to understand how cash transfer

Figure 0.7 Income Opportunities May Respond to Social Safety Nets



Source: Based on the meta-analysis described in chapter 2. “Business” refers to the household operating a nonfarm business (almost always small-scale or microenterprise business activities). Specific definitions of “Earnings” vary across studies.

programs can become a foundation on which to build engagement in complementary productive programs.

Bringing Social Safety Nets to Scale

Social safety nets in Africa do not yet cover all poor households. What impacts could be realized if programs were expanded to cover all poor households? Using data available from household surveys, alongside the results of the study's meta-analysis, this question is explored through simulations for three countries (Ghana, Liberia, and Niger), which assume that the number of beneficiary households would reach the number of extremely poor households in each country.

The simulations show that even relatively modest transfers (\$50 per household per month) would have a sizable impact on consumption among beneficiaries. If transfers were perfectly targeted, consumption among the poor would increase within a range of 12 percent–17 percent. These consumption gains would generate a decline in poverty rates by as much as 40 percent. The most substantial impacts would be realized with perfect targeting, but even imperfect targeting would reduce poverty in all three countries.

The impacts of expansion reach other facets of household life. Simulations indicate that ownership of livestock among the poor would rise. Likewise, well-targeted programs may raise landownership. Both can put households on a pathway out of poverty.

Overall, evidence clearly shows that social safety net programs can contribute significantly and efficiently to reducing poverty, building resilience, and boosting opportunities. For the full potential of social safety nets to be realized, these programs need to be brought up to scale and sustained. While this involves many technical decisions (box O.1), a series of decisive shifts must simultaneously occur in three other critical areas: political, institutional, and fiscal. These are explored in turn in the following chapters.

BOX O.1

Design Lessons in Bringing Social Safety Nets to Scale

A number of lessons emerge from the evaluations of program impacts in chapter 2 with regard to the design of programs and bringing social safety nets to scale:

- First, the value of a cash transfer matters. Ensuring impacts requires sufficiently large transfers.
- Second, the impact of programs relies on predictability. If benefits are not delivered with regularity, households cannot use them as effectively. As programs go to scale,

(continued next page)

Box O.1 (continued)

fiscal sustainability (i.e., regular funding) is needed to ensure that programs reach maximum impact.

- Third, coordination with complementary programs, such as skills training or other employment schemes, is critical for maximizing resilience and promoting productive inclusion. As social safety nets grow, there will be a greater need for a sound institutional framework to tie programs together.
 - Fourth, as programs grow, so will the demand for other services, such as schools, health care, and agricultural extension. The access to and quality of services become central instruments in maximizing program impacts. Achieving such impacts will then require institutional coordination as well as more investments in these services.
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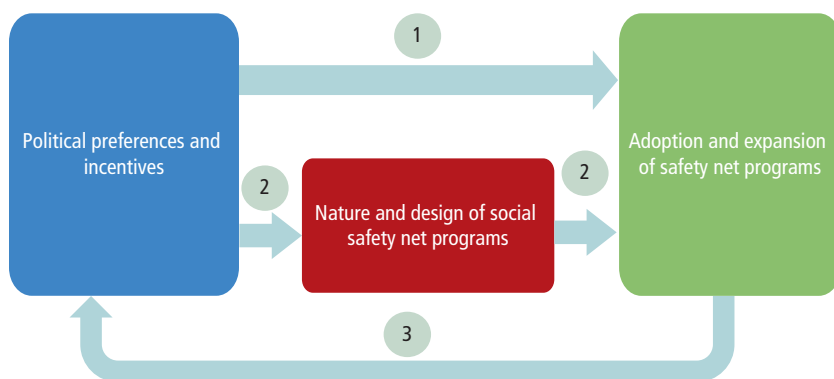
Recognizing and Leveraging Politics to Expand and Sustain Social Safety Nets (Chapter 3)

The impressive rate of expansion of social safety nets across Africa in the past decade proves that ideas, preferences, and political platforms can change even in places where the political environment might initially be unsupportive. Political dynamics evolve, and windows of opportunity open. These processes represent an opportunity to build sustainable, large-scale social safety net systems. The technical work of designing these systems should not ignore the political dimensions of social policy. Understanding and addressing the political processes and political economy behind social policy are as relevant and necessary as any technical assessment for crafting and implementing ambitious programs.

This study considers three main points of interaction between politics and social safety nets (figure O.8). First, the scope of social safety nets depends on political acceptability and desirability, which depend on social norms, the prevalence of poverty, and ideological factors such as the perceived causes of poverty and preferences for redistribution. Second, the choice of program and design parameters is influenced by political preferences and incentives and in turn influences the commitment to programs. Third, there is a feedback loop: the implementation of social safety net programs shapes the political environment. Politicians and citizens adjust their preferences and incentives and redefine their relationship as social safety net programs are implemented.

The Political Appetite for Adopting and Expanding Social Safety Nets

Political appetite is critical for expanding social safety nets and bringing them to scale, and for shaping social protection policies and programs more broadly. This appetite results from many factors. Here, the focus is on three factors that underpin a country's appetite for the adoption or expansion of social safety net

Figure 0.8 Politics and Social Safety Nets Interact

programs: beliefs and perceptions about social assistance, socioeconomic volatility, and the influence of external actors, including development partners.

Preconceptions influence the support for social safety nets. Commonly held preconceptions include the belief that the poor and recipients of social safety net benefits are lazy and undeserving of assistance. This idea is deep-rooted and has played a critical role in shaping policy choices (Seekings 2015). In Zambia, the social safety net agenda was strongly opposed by a minister of finance who claimed that the poor were really only lazy (Pruce and Hickey 2017).

Similarly, some believe that transfers to the poor are wasted resources because social safety net programs do not have productive impacts or may generate a culture of dependency. Both misconceptions can be partly addressed by showing decision makers evidence for such programs, including impact evaluations, direct exposure to successful programs in other countries, or country pilot experiences. Impact evaluations show that beneficiaries do not spend social safety net transfers on temptation goods, such as alcohol or tobacco, but rather on food and investments (chapter 2). The evidence also shows that programs have productive impacts through human capital and productive investments. They also confirm that programs result in more work by offering the opportunity for households to expand their farms and businesses.

Perceptions about social safety nets may shift following study tours and other forms of direct learning from similar programs around the world. In Ethiopia, the integration of social protection objectives in a rural development program partly drew on a study tour by government officials in the 1990s to the Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme, in India (Lavers 2016). Senegal's Programme National de Bourses de Sécurité Familiale (national cash transfer program, PNBSF) reflects the influence of the Brazilian and Mexican experiences to which a senior official had been exposed (Ndiaye 2017). Given the

importance of direct exposure to programs, pilot projects can also play a major role in convincing constituencies of the merits of the programs. In Uganda, the promotion of the Senior Citizens Grant Program as a success story through field visits, media story placements, and an evaluation seem to have created the support needed to make the program a political reality (Hickey and Bukenya 2016).

Changing political appetite by changing perceptions of the impact and value of social safety nets is not a quick process. At the other extreme, periods of rapid economic or social change offer a window of opportunity, wherein the political appetite for social safety net programs can evolve quickly. In many cases, emergency response programs established outside the sphere of social safety nets have created the political buy-in and infrastructure from which social safety nets have developed. Various crises have formed the basis of sustained social safety net systems, such as droughts in Botswana and Mauritania or conflicts in Mozambique and Sierra Leone (Albrecht 2017; Buur and Salimo 2017; Seekings 2016). Political crises or a desire to avoid a political crisis can also play a role. In Senegal, rising prices following the 2008–09 financial crisis and weak peanut and fishing sectors contributed to the president's emphasis on social safety nets following the 2012 election (Ndiaye 2017). Health crises have also been influential, for instance, the spread of HIV/AIDS in Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, and Zambia or the Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2014 (Granvik 2015; Hamer 2016; Pruce and Hickey 2017; Wanyama and McCord 2017).

Economic reforms—often a response to shocks—may rally political support for social safety nets to compensate those affected by fiscal consolidation and more generally garner support for the reforms. In Mozambique, urban protests spread across the country in 2008 and 2010 in response to the government's removal of subsidies and the rising costs of food and fuel. The protests provided the impetus for the adoption of the Productive Social Action Program in 2013 (Buur and Salimo 2017). Such situations offer an opportunity to rally for change in political appetite and support longer-term social safety net systems. Thus, social safety nets are becoming an explicit part of macroeconomic policy reforms.

In less volatile circumstances, international platforms and development partners can catalyze political support for social safety nets. One such entry point for shifting the policy dialogue is the international community's focus on the responsibility of governments for advancing human rights, as presented in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is often enshrined in legally binding agreements. Except for Botswana, the Comoros, Mozambique, and South Sudan, all countries in the region have ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and all but the Comoros and South Sudan are state parties to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The core values of human rights are in the constitutions of most countries, which identify particular groups as worthy of support (table O.1).

Table O.1 Constitutions Cover Vulnerable Groups

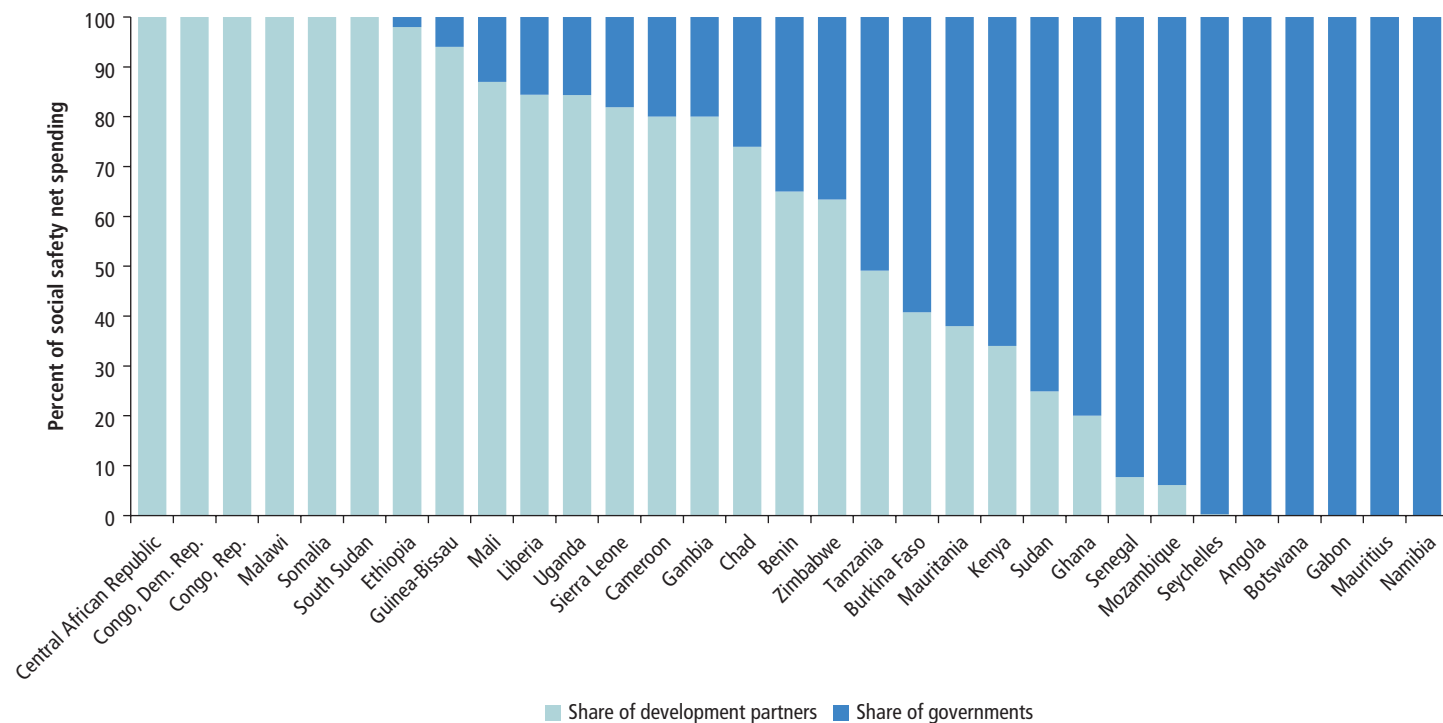
	Ethiopia	Kenya	Mozambique	Rwanda	Sierra Leone	Uganda	Zambia
Women		X	X				
Elderly	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Disabled	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Orphans	X	X	X				
Children	X	X	X				
Youth		X	X		X		
Indigents				X			
Minorities		X				X	
Survivors of conflict			X	X			

Source: World Bank data review.

Most countries are also parties to regional or global organizations that provide a normative framework for social safety nets, and more broadly for social protection systems, including the African Union Social Policy Framework, the Sustainable Development Goals, and the Social Protection Floor Initiative. While rights-based arguments may not have been significant in the adoption or expansion of social safety nets in the region, social safety nets themselves can help governments fulfill their human rights obligations by promoting civil, social, political, and economic rights.

Development partners can influence the political appetite for social safety nets by offering financing and technical assistance to overcome fiscal and capacity hurdles that influence the policy agenda (Chinyoka and Seekings 2016; Siachiwena 2016; Ulriksen 2016). On average, development partners finance 55 percent of program spending (with higher shares in lower-income countries, fragile and conflict-affected states, and humanitarian crises; figure O.9). However, until the dynamics of domestic politics help generate the commitment of key national stakeholders, development partner influence is mostly effective in securing the capacity and commitment of bureaucrats rather than political actors. Development partner pressure alone has not been found to be sufficient to generate substantial political commitment (Hickey and Lavers 2017). The initiative to introduce or expand social safety net programs can usually be traced to the dynamics of domestic politics, and development partners often only engage once the commitment of key stakeholders has been secured. For example, in Ethiopia, various development partners had long voiced concerns about the emergency food system. However, changes were finally adopted only when this coincided with the Ethiopian government's concerns, which were precipitated by a series of crises (Lavers 2016). In general, decisions to expand social safety nets have been made solely within broader government strategies, even when the programs have been largely financed by development partners (Cherrier 2015).

Figure 0.9 Development Partners Support a Large Share of Social Safety Nets



Source: For Angola, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe: ASPIRE (Atlas of Social Protection Indicators of Resilience and Equity) (database), Administrative data, World Bank, Washington, DC <http://www.worldbank.org/aspire>. For Benin, Botswana, and Mauritania: Monchuk (2014). For the Central African Republic: World Bank (2016d). For Chad: World Bank (2016c). For Ethiopia: World Bank (2016a). For The Gambia: UNICEF (2013). For Ghana: World Bank (2016b). For Guinea Bissau: World Bank (forthcoming a). For Mali: World Bank (forthcoming b).

Program Parameters Are Political

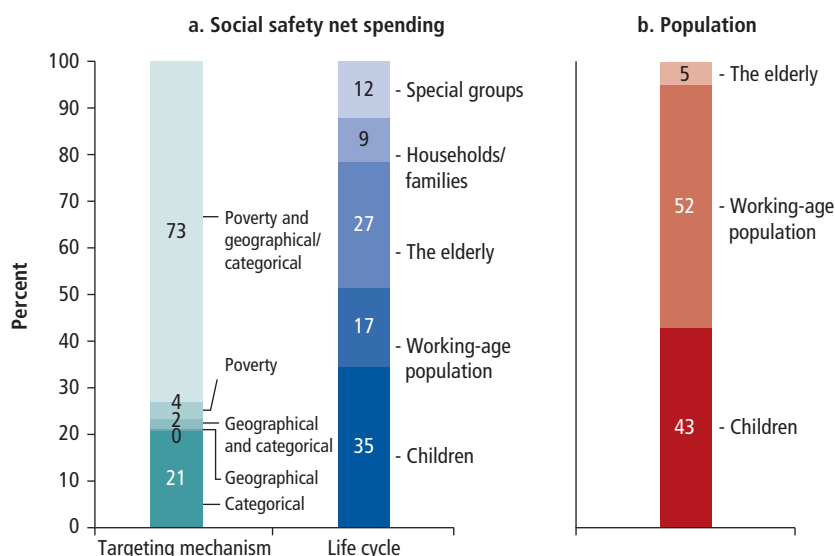
Domestic politics are also crucial for program design. The best designs are those that are technically sound, administratively feasible, and politically savvy. The elements of technical soundness and administrative feasibility are the main focus during program design, while political palatability is often underestimated or dealt with reluctantly (Pritchett 2005). At the extreme, a perfect technical design that ignores the politics of support for social safety nets could eventually be the worst option for those it means to serve. Political obstacles can be overcome to some degree by choosing the characteristics and parameters of programs that factor in political preferences or incentives, albeit sometimes with a technical efficiency trade-off.

Among the features of programs that have a political nature are conditionalities. Conditionalities could be introduced with the technical motivation of boosting the impact of programs. They can also be proposed to address perceptions related to deservingness by requiring beneficiaries to undertake extra efforts (such as sending children to school or taking children for regular health checkups). Often established as a technical option for self-targeting, work requirements may also help overcome concerns about the alleged laziness of recipients (public works programs, for instance). To promote a productive impact and alleviate concerns about dependency, social safety net programs are sometimes cast as part of a larger development program. Complementary initiatives, such as credit and extension programs, provide a potential route toward graduation. In Tanzania, the productive orientation of the Productive Safety Net Program was a major factor in securing political support because it addressed concerns about dependency and the importance of self-reliance (Ulriksen 2016).

The fear of promoting a culture of dependency may also be addressed by including clear time bounds in social safety net programs. Recertification processes may be considered a flexible time limitation. For instance, in Senegal, the PNBSF includes households for five years, after which a recertification process is planned to evaluate whether the households should stay in or exit the program. Recertification does not automatically push beneficiaries out of social safety nets, as in a time-bound design, but it may offer reassurance that the program is based on actual needs.

In some contexts, the response to concerns about deservingness and self-reliance has been to target only those who are thought to be unable to provide for themselves. While most safety net spending is on programs that include poverty, vulnerability, or welfare as targeting criteria (77 percent of total spending on average), in line with national constitutions, some programs in Kenya, Uganda, and Zambia are categorically targeted and, in most cases, means-tested, and target mothers, the elderly, children, and the disabled (see table O.1). Indeed, social safety net spending typically goes to the elderly

Figure O.10 Poverty Targeting Accounts for Most of Social Safety Net Spending, but the Elderly Benefit Most



Source: ASPIRE (Atlas of Social Protection Indicators of Resilience and Equity) (database), Administrative data, World Bank, Washington, DC, <http://www.worldbank.org/aspire>.

Note: The poverty category includes all programs that explicitly target households on the basis of welfare, poverty, or vulnerability, see methodology in appendix A.2.1. To identify households, these programs rely on community targeting, means or income tests, proxy-means tests, pension tests, self-targeting, or a combination of these. The figure presents the distribution of all resources deployed by all countries across different categories. See appendix table G.6.

and children in most of the region, and is not always also conditional on poverty (figure O.10). The elderly tend to be disproportionately supported relative to children (they receive 27 percent of all expenditures but represent only 5 percent of the population), although the impact on poverty reduction would be much larger with universal programs for children than with social pension programs (Guyen and Leite 2016).

Political realities may necessitate targeting groups beyond the poorest to attain political support. In some cases, while a focus on specific geographical areas might make sense from a poverty perspective, national coverage might be preferred. For example, in 2016, the Nigerian government decided to cover all six of the country's geographical zones in a pilot project on productive activities. In Uganda, the choice to roll out the Senior Citizen's Grant by targeting the 100 eldest pensioners in new districts arguably reflected a political move to distribute a small transfer as widely as possible, rather than pursue a more impactful technical design. At the end of the spectrum, universal coverage can

be the preferred option if the focus is on strict equality in treatment and the avoidance of any form of exclusion.

Similarly, taking political considerations into account in designing a social safety net program may result in technically suboptimal programs. In Rwanda, for example, the emphasis placed on infrastructure development has made ensuring the labor intensity of public works challenging. Political tweaks should be introduced as a last resort, kept to a minimum, and mitigated by a careful focus on program transparency because the tweaks are often added at the expense of technical soundness.

Political Impacts May Favor Social Safety Net Sustainability

While political realities influence program design, the implementation of programs can also change the political landscape. Social safety nets can affect the way households relate to governments, and leveraging this can be a means to promote program sustainability. More generally, social safety nets may induce changes in the discourse on poverty and on the role of the government and public policy. These efforts can help individuals realize that they are rights-holders and governments realize they are duty-bearers. This feedback loop shown in figure O.8 establishing and enhancing social safety nets can, in practice, generate more political appetite for programs, thereby fostering both expansion and sustainability.

Social safety nets may empower and promote social inclusion and the autonomy of beneficiaries within communities (Pavanello et al. 2016). In Kenya, Mozambique, and Zambia, orphans, other vulnerable children, and disabled beneficiaries have reported that cash transfers raised their sense of self-confidence, dignity, ability to be more assertive, and perception of future well-being (Attah et al. 2016; Handa et al. 2014a, 2014b; Haushofer and Shapiro 2013; Jones et al. 2016; Seidenfeld, Handa, and Tembo 2013). Greater social and economic inclusion within communities enhances household social support and resilience to shocks. Greater social cohesion and proximity may increase the support of richer households for social safety net programs, thereby contributing to program sustainability.

Programs may have negative impacts on inclusion and solidarity, however, if, for instance, the selection process among beneficiaries is perceived as unclear or unfair or if poverty rates are high (Ellis 2012). The selection process among beneficiaries must discourage stereotyping and resentment among nonbeneficiaries.

Social safety nets can change communities, and the interventions can result in political mobilization by bringing governments closer to beneficiaries (Jones et al. 2016). Some programs make explicit efforts to establish and promote relationships between the government and beneficiaries. In Cameroon and Mauritania, a contract is signed between beneficiaries and the government

during the registration of households for the programs, which highlights the contractual relationship. This is similar to the efforts in some Latin American social safety net programs to reshape the relationships between governments and individuals by signing contracts of co-responsibility, whereby beneficiaries commit to using basic services, while the government commits to ensuring adequate provision of the services, thereby emphasizing a reciprocal relationship (Fiszbein and Schady 2009).

These interventions can reshape the relationship between individuals and the state by increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to access other government processes, for instance, by supporting households in their efforts to obtain national identity numbers or identity cards. Thus, showing a valid birth certificate has been a condition for receiving the child support grant in South Africa. Because this requirement effectively bars access to the program by certain groups, a new procedure was introduced for delivering birth certificates directly to hospitals, thereby giving access to formal identification to new segments of the population (Glassman and Temin 2016).

Social accountability mechanisms may strengthen the political feedback loop by contributing to greater empowerment and voice among beneficiaries. Program features such as grievance redress and community and beneficiary participation may contribute to the social contract (Molyneux 2016; Ringold et al. 2012). However, social accountability mechanisms tend to be deployed most effectively by better-educated, wealthier, and more able-bodied individuals rather than those with less capacity to organize and voice their concerns (Giannozzi and Khan 2011; King and Hickey 2017). In Kenya, for example, the lack of political mobilization behind the Hunger Safety Net Program (HSNP) may be attributed to the fact that beneficiaries were mostly nomadic pastoralists in the north, a marginalized group (Hurrell and MacAuslan 2012). The design of social accountability mechanisms is thus critical in maximizing program potential.

Social safety nets may help establish a relationship between the poor and vulnerable and their government. They have also been shown to exert an impact on the political process. Social safety nets have appeared on political platforms. There is some evidence that elections have played a role in catalyzing a policy focus on social safety nets, such as the introduction of the Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty Program (LEAP) before the 2008 elections in Ghana or the correlation between the 2002 and 2007 elections and spikes in social assistance expenditures in Kenya. In Botswana, Ipelegeng, a public works program, specifically extended the previously rural-only drought relief programs to urban areas where opposition support had been growing (Hamer 2016). The political appetite for expanding social safety nets may also be spurred by concerns around the issues of local government and local politicians. In Kenya and Zambia, for instance, members of Parliament have urged the

expansion of small-scale pilot programs to new districts because of perceptions that political advantage may be gained by delivering benefits to their constituent local communities (Pruce and Hickey 2017; Wanyama and McCord 2017).

Evidence for the effect of social safety nets on voting behavior and electoral outcomes is derived mostly from large-scale cash transfer programs in Asia and Latin America. Electoral benefits are generally reaped by members of the incumbent party. Impacts may be lasting, but they eventually pale. Voters tend to reward incumbent parties, rather than the parties that initiated the programs. Adopting the programs of previous policy makers and supporting their expansion can therefore be rewarded politically. Even in national programs, the political gains may be local.

Once they expand beyond a certain size and demonstrate favorable impacts, programs can create long-term commitments that are politically difficult to discontinue. In Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico, for instance, programs that have been established for more than a decade and demonstrated positive impacts have been gradually adopted by parties and elites across the board, although each administration typically adjusts the programs to reflect changing policy objectives or approaches to poverty reduction. The name of a program may even be altered though the core features are retained.

Anchoring in Strong Institutions to Expand and Sustain Social Safety Nets (Chapter 4)

Institutions are central to the delivery of social safety nets and influence all aspects of program effectiveness. If the social safety nets in Africa are to be adequately expanded, institutions must evolve along multiple parameters, including the anchoring in laws and policies, mechanisms for coordination and oversight, and arrangements for management and delivery. Small pilot interventions may show results and contribute to building political support for the expansion of social safety nets, but broadening coverage typically requires some consolidation. Often, over time, as programs mature, program management will be shifted to government ministries or agencies; program designs and processes will become standardized; staffing will be transferred to the civil service or outsourced; and more comprehensive rules for the overall social safety net system will be formalized in policies, strategies, and laws.

Institutions impose the rules of the game that shape all aspects of social safety net policy, design, and implementation, ranging from establishing eligibility criteria and the regulations and procedures that govern the operations of the organizations that deliver the social safety net programs (including mandates and human resource policies) to sectoral laws and regulations. Beyond the formal rules, informal institutions—conventions and customary

practices—influence the provision of social safety nets because, for example, they mediate notions of deservingness or support and incentivize civil servants and frontline staff to deliver programs appropriately.

There are multiple paths toward formal and informal rules of the game that enable credible social safety nets in Africa, and many are linked to the development of broader social protection systems. Building a social protection system does not necessarily require a focus on a single entity or agency to manage multiple programs. Instead, it calls for a focus on the institutions, including the processes, that guide the design and delivery of social safety nets within government systems, including both formal and informal structures. There are numerous possible paths in this process. In some countries, such as Ethiopia, the development of a social protection policy took place after significant consolidation of social safety net programs and the achievement of near nationwide coverage. In other countries—such as Chad, Niger, and Sierra Leone—the development of social protection policies occurred early in the evolution of social safety nets and was accompanied by the implementation of small pilot programs. In Latin America, the need for greater coordination among a growing number of social programs encouraged governments to create coherent social safety net systems, usually within social protection policy and legal frameworks.

From Frameworks to Commitments: Emerging National Strategies for Social Safety Nets

Across the region, countries have increasingly focused on establishing an overarching institutional framework to advance social safety nets. Often, the policy commitments are embedded in international conventions and declarations, attesting to the layering of institutions across local, national, and international levels. The presence of these policies and laws or legal frameworks may signal an important step toward the firm anchoring of social safety nets in Africa, but it will not be sufficient to bring social safety nets to scale, as these first need to be matched with political support and financial resources.

There has been widespread adoption across Africa of international treaties related to social safety nets. However, there is variation in the degree to which social safety nets are anchored in national legislation, at times as part of a broader position on social protection. In most countries, legal support is limited to general constitutional provisions for supporting the vulnerable. This is the case in 12 of the 16 countries reviewed (table O.2). In Niger, for example, the constitution explains that “the State sees to the elderly through a policy of social protection.”

All countries include social safety nets in their national development strategies. Similarly, social protection policies and strategies have become common across Africa—typically covering both social safety nets and social

Table 0.2 Safety Nets in Most Countries Are Anchored in Laws, Policy, or Constitutions

Country	Constitutions include support for particular groups	Social safety net interventions in national development strategies and plans	A social protection policy or strategy exists and includes social safety nets	Social safety net entitlements or institutions are enshrined in national laws
Botswana	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Chad	No	Yes	Yes	No
Congo, Rep.	No	Yes	Yes ^a	No
Ethiopia	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Ghana	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Kenya	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes ^b
Mauritania	No	Yes	Yes	No
Mozambique	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Niger	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Rwanda	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Senegal	No	Yes	Yes	No
Sierra Leone	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
South Africa	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tanzania	Yes	Yes	No ^c	No
Uganda	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Zambia	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Source: A review of national documents for 16 countries.

a. MEPATI (2012).

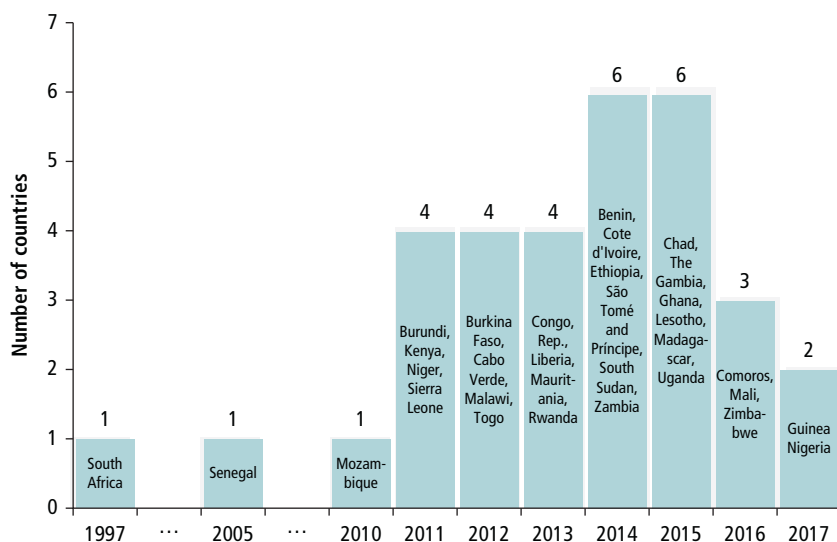
b. However, the Social Assistance Act contains provisions that have not been implemented, and it is expected to be repealed and replaced by a new act.

c. A social protection strategy has been drafted and is awaiting approval.

insurance—but they are often general and not fully implemented. Among the 48 countries in the region, 32 have approved and 7 are in the process of drafting such policies (figure O.11). However, while national strategies and policies may underpin social protection measures by making important statements about a government's ambitions, few of the programs that are guided by these strategies have been brought to scale.

Despite broad commitments in strategies and policies, most governments are reluctant to apply a terminology of entitlements. Basing entitlements or responsibilities firmly in laws could undermine a government's ability to implement social safety nets or to legislate in the future if the legal framework is unwieldy or impractical. However, if it is aligned with political interests and backed by sufficient resources, a legal framework can act as a strong anchor for social safety nets that prevents undue interruptions or suspension of programs. South Africa offers an example of how political incentives may be aligned with a legal framework for social safety nets. Similarly, in Mozambique,

Figure O.11 Many Countries Have Adopted Social Protection Strategies



Source: World Bank review of country documents.

Note: More details are presented in appendix D, table D.1.

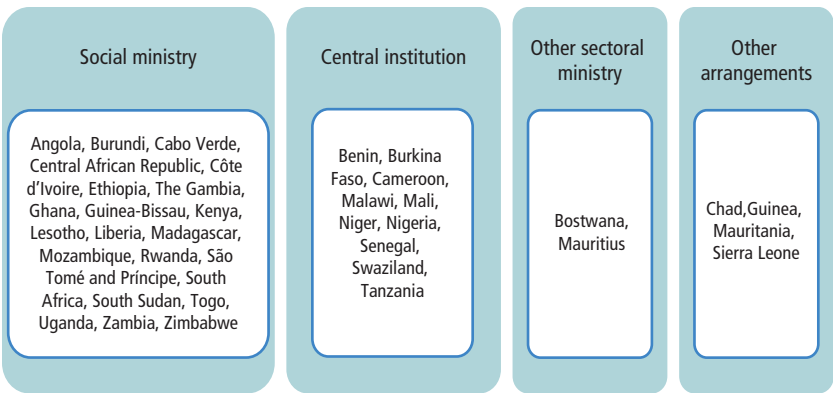
the development of an appropriate legislative framework—embodied in the Social Protection Law of 2007 and the National Strategy for Basic Social Security in 2009—has been key in realizing a social safety net.

Rooting Social Safety Nets in Organizations for Policy Setting, Oversight, Coordination, and Management

Until recently, there were few ministries responsible for social protection or social safety nets in Africa. The choice of responsibility is often a first step in setting out the institutional arrangements for social safety nets in governments. The criteria for the selection of a ministerial home for a social safety net typically depend on the factors that led to the emergence of the social safety net. In some countries, programs have emerged out of the experience of providing social security among formal sector workers; in others, they have appeared because of a concern about food insecurity or vulnerability to disaster. Typically, this background has determined where programs are housed.

The choice of ministry for policy setting, oversight, and coordination typically also results from considerations about mandates and political power, with initial decisions shaping the evolution of social safety nets in a country. In the region, this responsibility has been vested in a social ministry in 22 of the 38 countries reviewed (figure O.12 and appendix table D.1). This choice may reflect a desire to name a ministry that is already mandated to promote policies

Figure 0.12 Social Ministries Are the Typical—but Not the Only—Policy, Oversight, and Coordination Entities



Source: World Bank review of country documents for 38 countries.
Note: Central institutions include offices of the president or prime minister and ministries of the economy, planning, or finance. Other sectoral ministries include ministries of local government and rural development. See methodology in appendix A.2.2 and more details in appendix table D.1.

that support the poor and vulnerable. However, while social ministries may have the strongest mandate to support the poor, their financial resources and political influence are often limited. Central organizations—the office of the prime minister, the office of the president, or ministries of finance and planning—have been selected in a fourth of the countries. While these organizations may enjoy considerable authority and may have special procedures available that allow them to act more swiftly than technical ministries, the organizational culture may be less sympathetic to the needs of the vulnerable. The relative importance of these factors may change, resulting in shifts in the entity that leads in policy setting, oversight, and coordination.

Ensuring That Organizations Can Effectively Implement Social Safety Nets

The responsibility for the implementation and management of social safety net interventions is frequently housed in an entity separate from the policy-making and oversight entity, and usually in a ministry with a mandate that aligns with the aims of the program. Thus, social safety net programs with a protective focus, such as through unconditional transfers to categorical groups considered vulnerable, tend to be housed in social ministries, while programs that focus on more productive aspects may be assigned to ministries specializing in rural development, agriculture, roads, infrastructure, or water. Programs may shift homes over time. For instance, a program that emerges as a short-term response

to an emergency may be in a high-profile agency, such as an office of the president. However, as the program matures, a social ministry or agency with a policy mandate to serve the vulnerable may become a more appropriate home. Because these programs are relatively new in Africa, there are few examples of changes in institutional arrangements, whereas there are examples in countries or regions with more established programs, such as Colombia or Latin America more generally.

The choice of ministerial home shapes the evolution of social safety nets. Thus, a program may conform to the vision and mandate of the responsible organization. For instance, social workers in a social ministry may tend to focus on vulnerable groups with specific needs that are a reflection of the professional mandate and priorities of the social workers. Conversely, the coexistence of multiple views of social safety nets may result in institutional fragmentation. In particular, the preferences of development partners may play a decisive role in the selection of a ministry, and this tendency can lead to decisions to locate similar programs in different organizations, as in Tanzania and Uganda.

While the institutional home is tasked with managing the social safety net program or programs, operations are realized through organizations that manage and deliver interventions. There are five main categories of such entities: a preexisting department, a special-purpose department, a project implementation unit, a semiautonomous government agency, and a nongovernmental organization (NGO) or regional or international institution (United Nations agency and so on). Management arrangements vary by context, and the choice influences effectiveness. For instance, government departments are often hampered by the need to abide by ministerial procedures, and their fiduciary procedures or hiring standards are typically more restrictive than those that apply to a semiautonomous government agency or a project implementation unit. However, project implementation units are not suitable as a management structure in the long run and as programs are expanded. More sustainable solutions include making use of permanent ministerial units and local civil servants.

As programs grow, coordination becomes more critical, not least because of limited fiscal space and the need for efficiency (chapter 5). At this stage, the organizations responsible for delivering social safety nets need to involve multiple sectors and actors depending on design elements. Universal or unconditional programs may be associated with simpler institutional arrangements run broadly through one sectoral entity and local and national representatives. Conditional programs often require the engagement of multiple sectors, such as the ministries of health and education, as well as robust procedures for collecting information from health centers and schools on compliance with the program conditions. Public works programs frequently require the involvement of diverse technical staff. Actors charged with implementation may be located in

the private sector or civil society. Responsibility for the payment of transfers is often contracted to payment service providers.

At the higher level, social protection policies often include the creation of interministerial coordination committees, which are frequently expected to be chaired by ministers or cabinet secretaries. Forming such committees and calling meetings once they are formed are rarely prioritized. In Burkina Faso, for instance, the intersectoral national council for social protection only meets once or twice a year and mainly focuses on information sharing, the main output of which is lists of programs and expenditures. In countries where humanitarian programs are prominent or in fragile settings, NGOs and development partners often play critical roles. The coordination and oversight of these large programs implemented outside government are often of practical importance because of the size of the programs and the political nature of the response to shocks. In most Sahelian countries, humanitarian actors have initiated efforts to coordinate interventions, capitalize on good practices, and engage in advocacy.

In most African countries, social safety nets are the responsibility of national governments, but implementation arrangements vary. Most programs are funded centrally through the government budget or development partners, and, in all countries, central entities are tasked with policy setting, coordination, and oversight. Delivery may remain centralized or be deconcentrated or devolved. In some countries, such as the Republic of Congo, a national ministry delivers the social safety net program through frontline workers accountable to the ministry. Typically, if implementation occurs through a project implementation unit, as in Burkina Faso and Cameroon, the delivery is centralized, and project staff are recruited to coordinate local implementation. In other cases, the front-line delivery of programs falls to local services (deconcentration) or local governments (devolution), which are required to follow centralized guidelines and standards.

While standardized guidelines exist for most programs, some delivery choices depend on some local decision making. National standards enable consistent implementation, but some tasks may benefit from devolved decision making so delivery takes local realities into account. This flexibility can result in more effective processes, such as in targeting, and can encourage local buy-in. However, it can also lead to distortions or bias in implementation because local norms and practices may favor particular groups or objectives. In many contexts, in practice, there is variation across locations in the application of guidelines. This can be deliberate or the result of inadequate communication among program implementers.

Creating Incentives to Encourage Individual Actors to Deliver Results

As there are multiple ways to manage social safety nets, there are also various options in staffing. Programs may be delivered by staff who are fully dedicated

to the programs or by staff who, besides social safety net activities, are responsible for other programs. Staff may be civil servants or temporary staff on fixed-term contracts. Key functions might also be contracted to private sector providers, such as administering payments, organizing training activities, or even running the program implementation unit. Many programs also make use of voluntary community structures for elements of implementation.

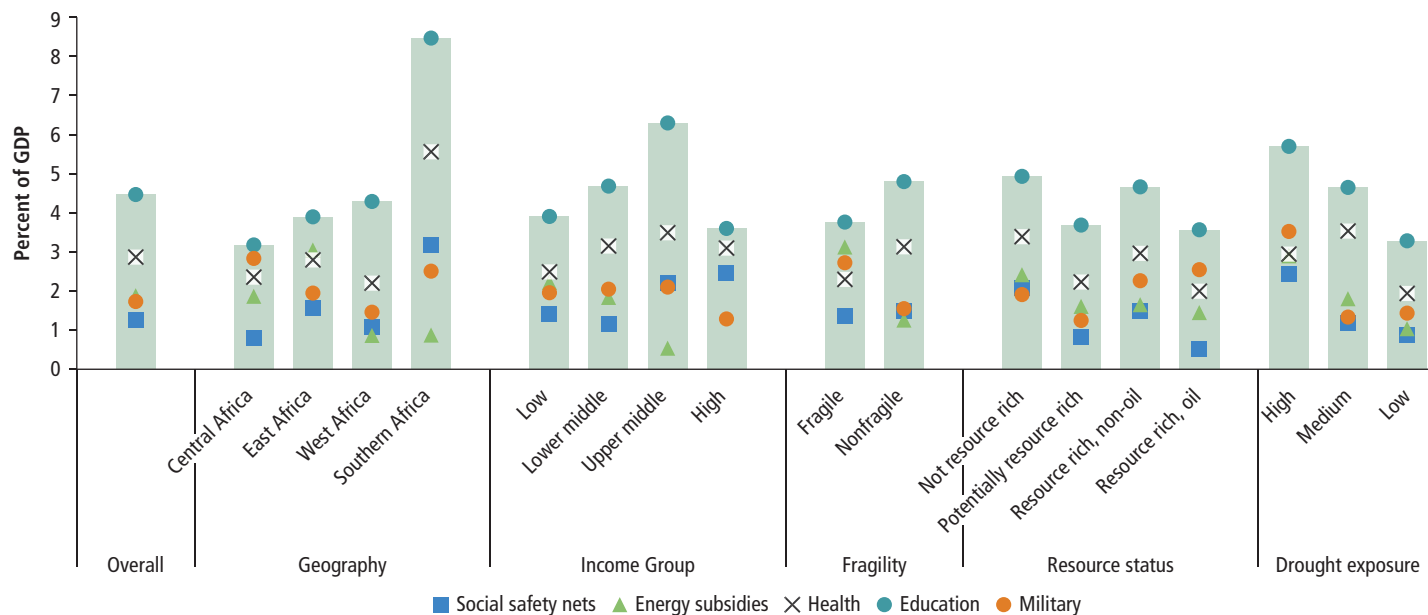
The issue of incentives for civil servants is generally critical for effective implementation, particularly as programs are taken to scale and shift into national systems. In many countries, the perception that civil servants are paid less than their peers working in the private sector (and less than the technical assistance providers paid by development partners in externally funded projects) and that career progression and accompanying pay increases are limited can produce low motivation and job dissatisfaction. The resulting high staff turnover—combined with slow recruitment processes, which may be based on networking rather than expertise—leads to gaps in capacity. Job dissatisfaction and low motivation among staff contribute to poor performance within the civil service. Interagency rivalry and rivalry between permanent and contract staff may also contribute to low capacity and, ultimately, poor performance. While reliance on technical assistance and contracts may deliver results in the short term, longer-term solutions are required to embed social safety nets at the heart of government systems and ensure sustainability.

Harnessing Resources to Expand and Sustain Social Safety Nets (Chapter 5)

Bringing social safety nets to scale has obvious fiscal implications. In light of the current fiscal context in most African countries, expanding the coverage of programs represents a serious challenge. Harnessing resources to expand social safety nets requires a multipronged approach, including achieving operational efficiency in interventions; enhancing the level and sustainability of financial resources; identifying the proper mix of domestic, foreign, public, and nonpublic funding sources; and deploying a flexible financing strategy to respond to shocks and crises.

Spending and Financing for Social Safety Nets: A Snapshot

Africa devotes on average 1.2 percent of GDP to social safety nets, compared with the global average of 1.6 percent. This spending is lower than spending on other sectors such as energy subsidies, health care, education, and, in some cases, the military (figure O.13). In particular, spending on energy subsidies—often cited as a means of supporting vulnerable households, but largely regressive in practice—is greater than spending on social safety nets in the region, with particularly high levels in Central and East Africa and in low-income countries.

Figure 0.13 Spending Is Lower on Social Safety Nets Than on Other Sectors

Sources: Spending data: ASPIRE (Atlas of Social Protection Indicators of Resilience and Equity) (database), Administrative data, World Bank, Washington, DC, <http://www.worldbank.org/aspire>. Energy subsidies: Coady et al. 2015. Other data: WDI (World Development Indicators) (database), World Bank, Washington, DC, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=world-development-indicators>.

Note: See methodology in appendix B.4 and more details in appendix G, table G.1. Data do not reflect recent reductions in subsidies, which have taken place post 2015 in several countries. Social safety net spending estimates are moderately different from those in World Bank (2018) due to data updates in this report and varying treatment of outlier data points.

Spending varies across the region. Africa-wide, upper-middle-income countries spend an average 2.2 percent of GDP, while low-income countries spend 1.4 percent, and lower-middle-income countries spend an average 1.0 percent. Southern Africa, with more upper-middle-income countries, spends an average of five times more than Central Africa and two times more than West and East Africa. Spending on social safety nets is lower in fragile states and resource-rich countries. Countries with greater exposure to natural disasters allocate more resources than those facing a low or medium risk of disaster. Particularly high spending is observed in a few countries (Lesotho, Namibia, and South Africa).

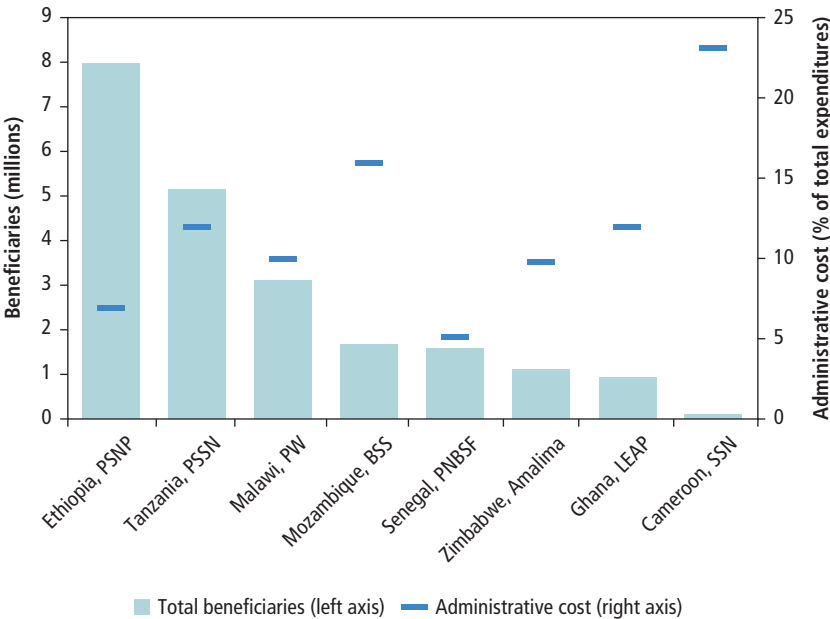
Development partners are critical for the financing of social safety nets (see figure O.9). On average, governments finance 46 percent of program spending, and development partners cover the other 54 percent (appendix table G.8 presents detailed information for selected programs). The share of development partners is higher in lower-income countries, in fragile and conflict-affected states, and in humanitarian crises. Given the fiscal constraints facing many governments, development partner support is likely to be crucial for bringing programs to scale in most countries.

Administrative costs may be high early on, but decline with scale. In terms of efficiency, administrative costs represent an average 17 percent of program spending (appendix table G.9). This reflects both the cost of initial investments in systems and the small size of many programs. While data are limited, the share of administrative costs tends to be lower in public works, school feeding, and social pension programs, possibly because of less costly targeting. Administrative costs tend to fall as programs increase in size. Administrative costs of the Social Safety Net Program in Cameroon also fell, from 65 percent in 2015 to 23 percent in 2016, as the number of beneficiaries quadrupled (figure O.14). In Mali, the administrative cost of the Jigisemejiri Program declined from 42 percent to 12 percent between 2014 to 2016, while the number of beneficiaries expanded from about 30,000 to about 375,000 individuals. The administrative costs of Mozambique's Basic Social Subsidy Program decreased slightly when benefit levels increased. However, expansion does not necessarily immediately lead to savings if programs expand geographically and need to develop new networks and systems, as with the Tanzania flagship program and the Malawi MASAF public works program (appendix table G.9).

Making Better Use of Existing Resources

There is substantial space to improve program efficiency and effectiveness. Effectiveness (defined as the highest coverage possible for a given level of spending) is higher in countries with stronger social safety net systems, with a central institution leading the sector, and with large social registries. On the other hand, the presence of development partners and of a social protection strategy are negatively associated with effectiveness, probably linked to the fact that

Figure 0.14 Administrative Costs Often Decline as Programs Grow, but Not Always



Source: ASPIRE (Atlas of Social Protection Indicators of Resilience and Equity) (database), Administrative data, World Bank, Washington, DC, <http://www.worldbank.org/aspire>.
Note: See details in appendix G, table G.9; Amalima = Response to Humanitarian Situation; BSS = Basic Social Subsidy Programme; LEAP = Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty; MASAF PWP = Malawi Social Action Fund Public Works Program PNBSF = National Cash Transfer Program; PSNP = Productive Safety Net Program; PSSN = Productive Social Safety Net Program; SSN = Social Safety Net.

effectiveness tends to be lower in countries with lower income levels or fragile countries, where development partners are more present (chapter 5 and table 5.2). Efficiency gains can be sought through enhanced administration (better tools, a systems approach, and improved resource allocation), improved accuracy in beneficiary selection, and the realignment of program objectives with beneficiary selection.

Well-functioning administrative tools are critical for the timely delivery of social safety nets to beneficiaries, but also for lowering the costs of benefit delivery. The Government of South Africa achieved large efficiency gains by overhauling administration, introducing a specialized agency for centralized administration and payments, distributing biometric smart cards, reregistering beneficiaries, and undertaking regular biometric proof-of-life verification (notwithstanding recent controversies surrounding the arrangements regarding the payment systems). Adopting technology can lower administrative costs.

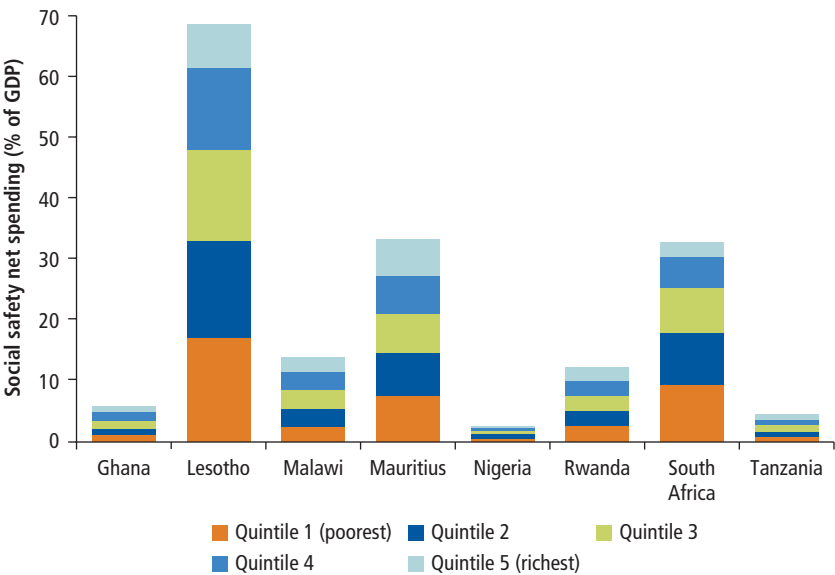
For example, the shift from cash to e-payments removes the complexity of distributing cash and reduces leakage. In Mexico, the integration of e-payments and social assistance—97 percent of 2.6 million pensioners are paid through a centralized system—saves about \$900 million in administrative costs annually.

Upgrading administrative processes and introducing technology can be expensive and brings capacity demands in the short term. A review of the use of e-payments for emergency cash transfers in Kenya and Somalia found that e-payments were not immediately cheaper than manual payments because of the higher start-up costs (O'Brien, Hove, and Smith 2013). The existing infrastructure and implementation capacity are critical for the successful introduction of new technology. In Zambia, an innovative mobile technology enumeration and registration system for the Social Cash Transfer Program did not outperform the paper system in a small pilot initiative because of challenges related to the poor network and the lack of compatibility with the management information system (IDinsight 2015). However, the situation may change in the medium to long terms.

Adopting a systems approach can also promote efficiency, especially in contexts with multiple programs. Unifying the tools used across programs to identify and enroll beneficiaries, make payments, and manage information can lead to economies of scale and help tackle fraud and error (chapter 4). The development of information systems and registries can result in significant savings. In Brazil in 2013, by checking data against the National Database of Social Information, which contains records on social security benefits, the unemployment insurance program was able to block approximately \$385 million in erroneous payments. In Romania in 2013, using a unique personal identification number in all major national databases (tax administration, social assistance, health care, pensions, disability) allowed cross-checks between social assistance and external data, which led to the recovery of around \$1.65 million.

A second avenue for efficiency gains is allocative efficiency, the extent to which programs reach the poor and vulnerable. Reaching the intended target population is not devoid of costs or easy to do (chapters 1 and 3). Programs with an explicit goal to target the poor are generally pro-poor, but some resources still go to the nonpoor. In the eight countries presented in figure O.15, an average 14 percent of social safety net spending is received by the richest 20 percent of the population, and 20 percent is received by the second-richest quintile. While there is scope for improving targeting and while these programs tend to be better targeted than other government interventions, perfect targeting does not exist, and costs vary depending on context. There is always a trade-off between cost savings and precision in reaching the poor. For example, proxy-means testing is costlier than a categorical or universal approach. There are also political considerations in targeting (chapter 3).

Figure 0.15 Social Safety Nets Are Progressive, but Some Benefits Go to Better-Off Households



Source: ASPIRE (Atlas of Social Protection Indicators of Resilience and Equity) (database), Administrative data, World Bank, Washington, DC, <http://www.worldbank.org/aspire>. Incidence is estimated on the basis of household survey data (appendix A, table A.2).
Note: Estimates are based on beneficiary incidence and total spending. For more details, see appendix G, table G.7.

Program choice, scale, and design are important for efficiency in poverty reduction. Programs may have smaller effects on poverty reduction if their coverage of the poor is limited, if they are poorly targeted, if the benefits are not delivered regularly, if the benefit amounts are too small, or if there are other constraints (beyond cash) that impede poverty reduction. Energy subsidies are an example of benefits often put in place with a poverty mandate, but with weak poverty impacts because they tend to favor the better off, given that large shares of the benefits accrue to richer households, which have the highest levels of consumption (Inchauste and Victor 2017). Several countries have phased out or reduced energy subsidies in favor of targeted social safety net programs, thereby achieving stronger poverty impacts and fiscal savings. More generally, evidence on the effectiveness of alternative program choices, design, and implementation arrangements, such as the information provided in chapter 2, can help policy makers make effective choices.

Securing Sustainable Resources to Expand and Sustain Coverage
Improving program efficiency and effectiveness can generate gains, but most countries must still raise social safety net spending to take programs to scale sustainably.

Further compounding this problem is the fact that the need for social safety nets tends to run countercyclical to macroeconomic conditions. Governments thus typically face fiscal pressures precisely when programs are most needed. During these times, social safety net spending should be protected or even increased to prevent long-lasting negative impacts of fiscal consolidation on the poor (IMF 2017).

Strengthening fiscal systems is the most sustainable option for financing sustained social safety nets at scale, given the uncertainties in the global macroeconomic and political environment, the rising costs of borrowing, and the unpredictable nature of external financing (IMF 2015). More generally, improving tax systems is a widely recognized imperative in Africa, where tax revenues stood at an average of about 21 percent of GDP between 2011 and 2014, compared with over 30 percent in high-income countries. Governments have a number of options for boosting tax revenue through quick, short-term wins and deeper long-term reforms. Curtailing illicit financial flows could also free resources for social safety nets. In 2012, almost \$1 trillion in illicit financial flows are estimated to have moved out of developing countries, and these flows amounted to almost 10 times the total aid received by developing countries (Kar, Cartwright-Smith, and Hollingshead 2010; Ortiz, Cummins, and Karunanethy 2015).

The increase in domestic revenue is unlikely to be sufficient to meet the financing required to bring social safety nets to scale in the short term. Governments need to also identify alternative funding sources. The financing provided by development partners is an obvious option that is already crucial for financing social safety net spending. It is especially strategic for financing initial investments, for example, establishing the building blocks for delivery. It can also be a catalyst for mobilizing domestic resources for social safety nets. In Mozambique, development partners have been central in advocating for a rise in budget allocations for the social protection strategy and the related plan (Bastagli 2015). Ethiopia's PSNP is an example of the successful integration of government and development partner funding, as well as of development partner harmonization.

Governments could explore more innovative financing options. Development impact bonds could be used to mobilize private sector financing for development objectives, including those of social safety nets. Development impact bonds allow private investors to prefinance social programs. Public sector agencies then pay back investors the principal, plus a return if the financed programs deliver the expected social outcomes (CGD and Social Finance 2013). Thus, the returns to investments are contingent on the achievement of the envisaged development objectives (Coleman 2016). Similarly, diaspora bonds could be used to direct remittances toward development goals. They are debt instruments issued by a government to raise financing from a diaspora and have been successfully introduced in India,

Israel, and Nigeria (Ketkar and Ratha 2007). Relative to other social sectors and regions, corporate social responsibility is an underutilized source for supporting social safety nets in Africa. A few governments have developed strategies and tools to access these resources to fund economic and development strategies. In Mauritius, all firms are requested to spend 2 percent of their profits on corporate social responsibility activities approved by the government or to transfer these funds for the government to invest in social and environmental projects.

Developing a Financing Strategy for Reliable, Effective Emergency Response

To manage the impacts of shocks effectively, ensure timely access to resources, and ultimately mitigate long-term fiscal impacts, governments are adopting a strategic approach to risk financing. In most contexts, disaster risk financing covers only a fraction of disaster losses, often in an unpredictable and untimely fashion. This leaves many of the vulnerable exposed. There are several financial instruments to address varying needs of governments to manage shock-responsive activities with financing that is timely, predictable, and commensurate with the magnitude of the shock.

Contingency or reserve funds can be established to finance relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction, and prevention activities in emergencies. These are used in, for instance, Colombia, Costa Rica, India, Indonesia, the Marshall Islands, Mexico, the Philippines, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, and Vietnam. Several African countries are seeking to establish similar funds. In Kenya, the government is in the final stages of operationalizing a national contingency fund dedicated to drought emergencies. Efforts are also under way to establish such funds in Madagascar and Mozambique. Contingent loans can be used to gain access to liquidity immediately following an exogenous shock. They have been used by multilateral development banks to create lines of credit that can be activated if a shock occurs.

Risk transfer mechanisms, which are financial or insurance instruments, are another option for insuring against shocks. They can be used in the case of risk to specific meteorological or geological events—droughts, hurricanes, earthquakes, and floods—or commodity price shocks. These market-based products use scientific information and actuarial modeling to estimate the losses that would be sustained because of a specific event and then price the risk. Payments are triggered if a prespecified underlying parametric index reaches a certain value (such as a stated level of rainfall, the length and intensity of a drought, or commodity price movements). Examples include the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility, the Pacific Catastrophe Risk Assessment and Financing Initiative, and African Risk Capacity.

Depending on the frequency and severity of the various risks in a particular country, governments can combine financing instruments. Each instrument is adapted to different needs and has different cost implications. Sovereign insurance may provide cost-effective coverage against extreme events, but it may be inefficient and costly in protecting against recurring low-intensity events. For such frequent events, a dedicated contingency fund may be a more appropriate solution. Combining instruments also enables governments to take into account the evolving needs for funds for emergency response or long-term reconstruction. A government might decide to purchase *ex ante* rapidly disburseable risk transfer instruments to ensure immediate liquidity in the aftermath of extreme events, but raise the larger sums required to finance reconstruction efforts through *ex post* budget reallocations or by issuing bonds.

The Road Ahead for Bringing Social Safety Nets to Scale in Africa

Governments in Africa are increasingly positioning social safety nets as a core instrument in their strategies to address poverty and vulnerability. The number of programs has expanded rapidly, and coverage is growing, albeit slowly. Programs are also evolving to integrate a productive focus and adaptability in the face of shocks. Still, in most countries, most of the poor and vulnerable are not yet covered by social safety net systems. A range of rigorous evaluations have demonstrated that such programs can improve equity, resilience, and opportunities for the benefit of the poor and vulnerable. For these systems to play this role, however, they need to be brought to scale and provide effective coverage in a sustainable fashion.

Bringing social safety nets to scale to reach their full potential in Africa—making them sustainable and effective at combating poverty and vulnerability—will require a focus on the political, institutional, and fiscal barriers and opportunities. A strategic approach to engaging in the political process, including choosing politically informed program parameters, can strengthen social safety net systems. Understanding how to anchor social safety nets in institutions for coordination, management, and implementation at scale is critical. Social safety nets require reliable funding, but also efficient spending. In light of the fiscal constraints that many governments face, smarter spending and new sources of funds are needed, as well as a financing strategy that matches the risk profile of the country. Overall, strategic choices need to be made to give social safety nets the place they deserve in Africa's broader national development and poverty reduction strategies.

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Poverty has been declining in Sub-Saharan Africa, but millions are still poor or vulnerable. To address this ongoing and complex problem, all countries in the region have now deployed social safety net programs as part of their core development plans. The number of programs has skyrocketed since the mid-2000s, although many interventions are still modest in size. This notable shift in social policy reflects an embrace of the role that social safety nets can play in the fight against poverty and vulnerability, and more generally in building human capital and spurring economic growth. *Realizing the Full Potential of Social Safety Nets in Africa* provides evidence that positive impacts on equity, resilience, and opportunity are growing, and it is clear that these programs can be good investments.

For the potential of social safety nets to be realized, however, they need to expand with smart technical and design choices. Beyond technical considerations, and at least as important, this book argues that a series of decisive shifts needs to occur in three critical spheres: political, institutional, and financial:

First, to recognize the role of politics in offering opportunities for expansion and in guiding design and program choice;

Second, to anchor safety net programs in strong institutional arrangements that facilitate their expansion and sustainability;

And third, to build sustainable financing through greater efficiency, more varied and predictable resources, and shock-responsive resources.

Ignoring these spheres may lead to technically sound, but practically impossible, choices and designs. A deliberate focus on these areas is essential if social safety nets are to be brought to scale and sustained at scale. Only then will their full potential and their contribution to the fight against poverty and vulnerability be realized.