

# How do social protection programmes in the Global South affect migration decisions? A review of the literature

WORKING PAPER



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Global interest on expanding social protection to low- and middle-income countries, particularly since the early 2000s, has translated into many new initiatives across countries and an ever-greater number of people covered.

Over the same period, international and internal migration have also continued increasing worldwide. Migration, and the desire for change, arises from the need to manage a wide range of socioeconomic risks. Migrating is often not the only option available. In fact, most people do not aspire to migrate at all, while others do not have the capacity to migrate. Providing access to alternative livelihood opportunities and coping mechanisms may provide another option.

Migration often results from the need to ensure a job, a better and more steady income and to protect one's family against risks, all similar to the aims of social protection, this paper reviews the literature on the links between the decision to migrate and social protection coverage.

Social protection programmes are highly contextual, and the conditions, mechanisms and specificities differ from country to country, and programme to programme. The design and delivery of social protection programmes, such as who receives the transfer, how much is transferred and the conditions under which the transfer is made, are therefore highly relevant when discussing how they may influence migration decisions.

This paper reviews the body of academic literature on the link between emigration and social protection. It reviews 76 papers, covering 85 countries, published before or in 2020. The following types of social protection programmes are reviewed:

- Conditional cash transfers (CCTs)
- Unconditional cash transfers (UCTs)
- Non-contributory pensions
- Social and health insurance schemes
- Public works programmes

Other factors that are considered include the type of migration (international, internal, temporary), individual and household characteristics (education, gender, ethnicity, age, income), contextual characteristics (labour markets, attractiveness of destinations, culture of migration, shocks), programme design (conditional presence, target group, geographical scope, amount transferred, frequency, type of benefit) as well as implementation and methodological concerns.

While the literature does not necessarily consistently point to a coherent or linear link between migration and social protection, the following overarching points can be drawn from the findings:

**Macro-economic conditions in both origin and destination countries matter.**

They can potentially override any impact of social protection. For instance, when poor local labour markets remain unchanged before and after a social protection intervention is administered, any effect on the individual or household will be temporary. Wage differentials between origin and host locations may also outweigh the relative benefits of a social protection programme.

**Findings are often counter-intuitive and counter assumptions by policy makers.**

The effects are related to specific design factors and exact individual and household profiles. For instance, CCTs may increase migration for certain profiles as conditions may not target nor constrain those people in a household most prone to migrate.

**Pure cash transfers (including conditional transfers) are more likely to lead to migration than ‘Cash Plus’ benefits.** This includes transfers of skills, education and health. Similarly, regular transfers are more likely to lead to migration, than punctual or one-time transfers.

**The impact of a social protection programme on migration may only materialise in the long-term.** For instance, a CCT that targets the education and health of children may not have any short-term impacts on migration because parents must stay home to ensure that health and school attendance conditions are met for their children. However, once the children are adults, the additional education and health benefits accrued will increase their potential to be mobile and find jobs elsewhere. Such effects may therefore take 15-20 years.

We now provide a detailed summary of the findings of the review.

This review retrieved 76 studies that explicitly examine the impact of social protection on migration decision-making, migration outcomes or aggregate migration flows. There is no clear pattern emerging from these studies: 21 studies find that access to social protection programmes have mixed outcomes on migration, 23 studies find that it decreases migration, 21 studies find that it increases migration, while another 11 find that social protection programmes have no impact on migration.

Key findings were assessed according to their consistency across various factors, using the Shannon Information Criterion (SIC), which considers the evenness of the distribution across the migration outcomes (increase, decrease, mixed findings and no impact). A SIC of 0.2 or lower is considered consistent, whereas a SIC of 0.8 or higher is considered inconsistent (see note below Table 1).



## BY TYPE OF MIGRATION

In general, there is very little consistency in the reviewed studies on the type of migration (see Table 1), although there is slightly more consistency on international migration than there is for internal migration, and in a few specific contexts, such as the public pension in South Africa.

There were 36 studies investigating the impact of social protection on internal migration: while 17 studies described a decrease in internal migration, a nearly equal number of 18 described an increase; seven studies described a mixed impact of both increases and decreases based on a number of specific factors, and ten showed no impact. Moreover, the results do not seem to be related to a specific country context or event nor the level of urbanisation or history of internal migration. Some patterns of consistency were found for some programmes. For instance, all studies on South Africa's public pension found it led to an increase in internal migration, similarly for three studies on Mexico's Oportunidades programme.

Of the 33 studies investigating **international migration**, **13 find an increase, nine find a decrease, while six conclude a mixed impact and five no impact at all**. The conclusions do not seem related to migration history, proximity to job-rich countries, migration rates, or any specific event.

The papers were also reviewed for impacts on **temporary migration**, including circular, temporary, seasonal, short-term or return migration. Altogether, there were 25 studies that mentioned a temporary migration context and findings are again inconsistent, with **ten concluding an increase, six a decrease, seven no impact at all, and two suggesting a mix of impacts**. Breaking this down by international and internal migration reveals a much more consistent conclusion for international migration, but not internal migration. For international temporary migration more studies (six) suggested an increase in light of a social protection programme, compared to only two studies suggesting a decrease, and two others concluding no impact.

**TAB 1. KEY FINDINGS ON TYPE OF MIGRATION FLOWS**

| Type of migration | Number of studies | Consistency of findings | Key findings   |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|--|
| Internal          | 36                | Inconsistent            | 18 studies find an increase in internal migration, 17 a decrease, seven mixed findings and ten studies find no impact. |

|   |    |              |  |
|---|----|--------------|--|
| International   | 17 | Inconsistent | Nine studies find an increase in international migration, 13 a decrease, six mixed findings and five studies find no impact.           |
| Temporary (circular, temporary, seasonal, short-term, return) | 25 | Inconsistent | Ten studies find an increase in some form of temporary migration, six a decrease, two mixed findings and seven studies find no impact. |

Note: Consistency of findings is assessed using the Shannon Information Criterion, which considers the evenness of the distribution across the four possible outcomes: 1) increase, 2) decrease, 3) mixed findings, 4) no impact. As such, 'no impact' is also considered an outcome. Studies that provide a greater level of disaggregation are more likely to end up in the mixed category. Factors are then classified from consistent (Shannon Information Criterion  $\leq 0.2$ ) in five equally sized categories to inconsistent (Shannon Information Criterion  $\geq 0.8$ ).

## BY TYPE OF PROGRAMME

Some interesting patterns emerge, when disaggregating the findings by type of social protection programme. The most common programme covered in studies are conditional cash transfers (CCTs). **About half of the studies show an increase of migration (8 studies) or a decrease (8 studies), while the other half of the studies have found that access to CCTs have mixed outcomes on the propensity to migrate** (e.g. during different periods of time or producing different kinds of migration flows). Three studies found no impact. As such, it is far from clear whether CCTs increase or decrease the propensity to migrate. This finding also comes out strongly when restricting scope to those studies that cover the same programme (e.g. Oportunidades). The programme-specific analysis shows that impacts can be different for different types of migration and household members and depend on length of receipt and context.

For unconditional cash transfers (UCTs) the evidence base is much smaller and with no clear patterns, showing **mixed outcomes (2 studies), decreases in migration (2 studies) and one study each showing an increase and no impact**. The lack of an overall pattern shows the importance of disaggregating findings e.g. by type of migration flow, and understanding the underlying mechanisms of impacts.

Seven of the nine studies examining the effects of non-contributory pensions on migration find an increase in migration by members of the household of a pensioner. These findings are closely linked to family composition and gender of the beneficiary, see mediating factors below.

Slightly more than half of the nine studies on social insurance find that higher coverage of social insurance is associated a decrease in migration (5 studies), with three studies finding a mixed impact and one finding an increase. Social insurance is linked with job formality and those with social-security coverage decided to stay because they had jobs with benefits that were worth keeping. However, some programmes also cover informal workers, where the patterns are less clear-cut.

The **evidence on employment guarantee schemes is also mixed**, while six studies find a decrease in migration, another five find no impact, two mixed outcomes and four finding an increase in migration. The evidence on the NREGA scheme in India, for instance, shows mixed findings, with impact mediated by design and implementation of the scheme. The studies highlight the importance of disaggregating findings for different demographic groups; see discussion on mediating factors below.

**TAB 2. KEY FINDINGS ON MIGRATION BY PROGRAMME**

| Programme                   | Number of studies | Consistency of findings       | Key findings   |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| CCTs                        | 33                | Inconsistent                  | 8 studies find a decrease of migration, 8 studies find an increase, 14 studies find mixed outcomes and 3 find no impact. |
| UCTs                        | 7                 | Inconsistent                  | 2 studies find mixed outcomes, 2 find decreases in migration and 2 studies show an increase and one shows no impact.     |
| Non-contributory pension    | 9                 | Mainly consistent in increase | 7 studies find an increase in migration, 1 finds a decrease and 1 no impact.   |
| Social and health insurance | 8                 | Mainly consistent in decrease | 5 studies find a decrease in migration, and 3 find mixed outcomes.   |
| Public works and employment | 17                | Inconsistent                  | 6 studies find a decrease in migration, 4 an increase, 5 find  |

guarantee  
schemes

no impact and two mixed  
impact outcomes.

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Note: Consistency of findings is assessed using the Shannon Information Criterion, which considers the evenness of the distribution across the four possible outcomes: 1) increase, 2) decrease, 3) mixed findings, 4) no impact. As such, 'no impact' is also considered an outcome. Studies that provide a greater level of disaggregation are more likely to end up in the mixed category. Factors are then classified from consistent (Shannon Information Criterion  $\leq 0.2$ ) in five equally sized categories to inconsistent (Shannon Information Criterion  $\geq 0.8$ ).

## INDIVIDUAL AND HOUSEHOLD LEVEL MEDIATING FACTORS

It is clear that impacts on migration depend on more than receipt of social protection, they are mediated by i) individual and household factors, ii) contextual factors, iii) programme design and implementation and iv) the methodology and data used.

The characteristics of social protection beneficiaries and their households matter in explaining the effects on migration flows. Skill and education level can affect the potential payoffs to be had from migration, credit constraints, but also the ability to contribute to social insurance programmes. While on the whole **those who had higher education levels are more likely to migrate** (e.g. Azuara; 2009), Angelucci (2013) shows that unskilled migration increases as a result of Oportunidades in Mexico because unskilled households face the greatest credit constraints.

Gender of both the beneficiary and (potential) migrant mediate migration outcomes. Several studies show that **female beneficiaries are more likely to share their income with other household members**, allowing other household members, especially women, to migrate. Other studies suggest women are more likely to migrate than men, especially when they are high skilled or the programmes have enabled them to increase their human capital (Hidrobo et al., 2020; Parker and Volg, 2018). On the whole, studies on CCTs found that women had to stay behind to meet conditions of the programmes as mothers and caregivers (Hughes, 2019; Ishikawa, 2014) or to support other household members participating in the public works (Hoddinott et al., 2020).

**Ethnicity is another factor that mediates the outcomes of social protection, although the evidence is patchy.** For example, de la Rocha (2009) found that Oportunidades in the long-term increased internal migration of indigenous youths who have less profitable job opportunities at home, while a study on China shows that ethnic minorities are less likely to migrate as other barriers to migration e.g. language or information gaps may be more critical than credit constraints (Howell, 2019). This means that it is **important to understand the underlying mechanisms driving these different outcomes for different ethnic groups.**

Age of the beneficiary may also mediate the effects of social protection programmes, though the **evidence on whether youth are more likely to migrate as a result of social protection is mixed**. One of the objectives of CCTs is to keep children and youth at risk of dropping out of education in school. A number of studies indeed find that CCTs reduce or delay migration in the short-term while children and youth attend school and receive the cash benefit, likewise for other programmes, such as the Business Grant Program in South Sudan (Muller et al., 2019). However, other evidence suggests that social protection programmes have no effect on young beneficiaries because they migrate without the knowledge and permission of their guardians (Deshingkar et al., 2015).

In terms of household characteristics, various studies show that migration of indirect beneficiaries (youths, young adults and head of households) belonging to beneficiary households tend to increase, while older beneficiaries tend to stay (e.g. Gil-Garcia, 2019; Soares, 2011; Winters et al., 2005). Household with large numbers of children tend not to migrate in the short-term, while these (some?) are completing their studies (Aguilar et al., 2019). This shows that households implement different strategies to diversify their income and to benefit from both social protection and migration simultaneously, without having to compromise the benefits of one over the other.

The **effect of household income, poverty status, or social class is unclear**. Some studies have found that poorer and low-asset households tend to migrate more than wealthier ones, as transfers loosen liquidity constraints (Cortina, 2014; Mesnard, 2009; Tiwari and Winters, 2019). However, Chau et al., (2012) observed an inverted U-shape relationship between average per capita income and migration, in line with the general migration literature.

**TAB 3. KEY FINDINGS ON MIGRATION BY INDIVIDUAL AND HOUSEHOLD MEDIATING FACTOR**

| Factor    | Number of studies | Consistency of findings       | Key findings   |
|-----------|-------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Education | 6                 | Mainly consistent in increase | Four studies find that those with greater education levels (e.g. as a result of the programme) are more likely to migrate. However, two studies found that those with greater skills, who can afford to contribute to a social insurance scheme, stay at home  |
| Gender    | 14                | Inconsistent                  | Female beneficiaries (particularly those receiving a pension) enable migration of other household members and are mostly more likely to migrate themselves, though some studies have mixed findings (e.g. age mediates gender impacts). Five studies found migration of women decreased, for instance because they had to stay behind to meet conditions of the programme. |
| Age       | 7                 | Mainly consistent in decrease | On the whole young beneficiaries of social protection are less likely to migrate in the short-term, though three studies found an increase of migration from youth.  |
| Ethnicity | 7                 | Inconsistent                  | No clear pattern emerges. Some studies show that beneficiaries of  |

indigenous populations are more likely to migrate, although whether they prefer internal over international migration remains unclear.

|                          |    |  |  |
|--------------------------|----|--|--|
| Household composition    | 23 | Variation in specification of household composition doesn't allow for assessment | Indirect beneficiaries in beneficiary households are more likely to migrate  |
| Household income/ wealth | 13 | Little consistency   | Seven studies find that poorer households are more likely to migrate as the social protection programme helps them overcome credit constraints, while five find that the programme is enough to meet their basic needs so migration decreases. |

Note: Consistency of findings is assessed using the Shannon Information Criterion, which considers the evenness of the distribution across the four possible outcomes: 1) increase, 2) decrease, 3) mixed findings, 4) no impact. As such, 'no impact' is also considered an outcome. Studies that provide a greater level of disaggregation are more likely to end up in the mixed category. Factors are then classified from consistent (Shannon Information Criterion  $\leq 0.2$ ) in five equally sized categories to inconsistent (Shannon Information Criterion  $\geq 0.8$ ).

## CONTEXTUAL MEDIATING FACTORS

Contextual factors also mediate the impact of social protection programmes on migration outcomes. Local labour markets and the availability of jobs can determine the need to migrate and mediate the impact of social protection. **When local jobs are scarce or poorly paid, migration continues to take place regardless of the provision of social protection and may even be used to finance migration** (e.g. Sienaert, 2008, Hirdrobo et al., 2020). These effects are also mediated by education and may change over time. **When social protection programmes also aim to bolster education levels – as some CCTs do – over time, as beneficiary populations become more educated, there may be greater incentives to migration, if local labour markets do not adapt.** Migration can also be mediated



by inequalities in access to the labour market or better paying jobs e.g. ethnic minorities who face intersectional inequalities may be more likely to migrate (e.g. de la Pena, 2017).

Likewise, the attractiveness of a destination (e.g. in terms of availability of jobs, wage differentials and ease of migration) can explain why migration may continue or increase after social protection receipt. When a destination becomes *less attractive*, for instance due to greater border enforcements (Cortina, 2014; Latapi, 2000) or a slow-moving economy (Cortina, 2014), the impact of participation in a social protection programme may be felt more strongly. However, some exceptions on MGNREGA show that migration decreases with social protection receipt, because recipients have a preference for staying locally, even with jobs generated through the programme being poorly paid (e.g. Papp, 2012; Parida, 2006; Ravi et al., 2012).

More generally, previous exposure to migration and a culture of migration may explain why migration continues regardless of social protection participation (e.g., de la Pena, 2017; Palacios and Rubio, 2012), particularly if there is uncertainty about the future or the continuation of the programme (Curiel, 2000), with one exception (Steklov et al., 2005). More generally, the social protection impact is mediated by the social and cultural norms around the purpose and meaning of migration (Himmelstine, 2017).

Finally, other shocks experienced by beneficiary households may explain why households continued to migrate despite receiving social protection, with social protection often used to overcome credit constraints. One study, however, observed a decrease in migration in the face of climatic shocks, when Procampo transfers were larger or more equally distributed (Chort and de la Rupelle (2019). Finally, cash transfers can also facilitate migration in regions of conflict, as observed in Colombia (Mesnard, 2009).

**TAB 4. KEY FINDINGS ON MIGRATION CONTEXTUAL MEDIATING FACTOR**

| Factor               | Number of studies | Consistency of findings | Key findings  |
|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Local labour markets | 6                 | Little consistency      | In three studies migration increases or continues with poor domestic/ local employment prospects, even with the provision of social protection. |



|                                   |    |                                       |  |
|-----------------------------------|----|---------------------------------------|--|
| Attractiveness of the destination | 21 | Overwhelmingly consistent in increase | Migration continues or increases for beneficiaries of social protection when destinations are more attractive e.g. in terms of wage differentials. However, some exceptions show that migration decreases with social protection receipt even if migration destinations are attractive for example because they have a preference for staying locally. |
| History and culture of migration  | 5  | Little consistency                    | Previous exposure to migration and cultural and social norms mediate migration aspirations and can override social protection impacts  |
| Other shocks experienced          | 9  | Little consistency                    | Other shocks e.g. climatic shocks, conflict, can in a few instances explain why migration continues despite the provision of social protection.  |

Note: Consistency of findings is assessed using the Shannon Information Criterion, which considers the evenness of the distribution across the four possible outcomes: 1) increase, 2) decrease, 3) mixed findings, 4) no impact. As such, 'no impact' is also considered an outcome. Studies that provide a greater level of disaggregation are more likely to end up in the mixed category. Factors are then classified from consistent (Shannon Information Criterion  $\leq 0.2$ ) in five equally sized categories to inconsistent (Shannon Information Criterion  $\geq 0.8$ ).

## DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION FACTORS

On the whole, the design and implementation of social protection transfers does not lead to consistent outcomes on migration.

In terms of design, studies consider i) conditionality (in particular whether presence is required) , ii) specific type of beneficiary targeted, iii) geographic targeting, iv) amount transferred, v) regularity of the transfer, and vi) whether the benefit is cash or mixed/ non-cash.

While as discussed above, conditional transfers, on the whole, do not seem to have different outcomes than unconditional transfers, the ‘presence requirement’ of many CCTs may be a specific design element that could influence migration outcomes. Surprisingly, the studies analysing presence requirements mostly find mixed outcomes (suggesting reshuffling within the household) as well as both increases and decreases in migration.

The link between conditional presence and migration may be related to the specific beneficiary targeted within a household. The only target group where there is some consistency in terms of findings are transfers targeted at the elderly (i.e. mostly pensions), where a pension might allow another adult household member to migrate (see discussions above on type of programme and household factors).

Not all programmes are nationally implemented and some might be focused on specific regions (initially) or targeted at rural areas. There is more evidence of an impact (both increase and decrease) for national programmes rather than specific regional or rural ones.

There is little explicit evidence that either the amount transferred or its regularity are clear determinants of the link between social protection and migration. Both low and higher amounts lead to inconsistent findings. In terms of regularity, there is little consistency for monthly transfers where most studies find an increase, perhaps because regularity gives predictability and aids planning. Most of the few studies for on-demand transfers (e.g. insurance) show that it reduces migration, though on the whole, there is little consistency. Regular, less than monthly and one-time transfers do not show any consistent patterns.

Finally, transfers can be purely cash or mixed/ non-cash. There is little consistency for cash transfers, where most studies show an increase when the transfer is cash, particularly for non-conditional transfers, perhaps being used to finance migration. For mixed or non-cash benefits the findings are inconsistent.

One issue sufficiently covered in the literature is implementation.. While the literature points out various implementation challenges, such as arbitrary targeting for a programme in Indonesia (Tiwari and Winters, 2019) or corruption with regards to NREGA, there are no consistent patterns for implementation issues and migration outcomes.

**TAB 5. KEY FINDINGS ON DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION FACTORS**

| Factor                 | Number of studies | Consistency of findings | Key findings   |
|------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|--|
| No presence required   | 40                | Inconsistent            | While the most studies find a decrease in migration when no presence is required (16), on the whole findings are inconsistent.   |
| Presence required      | 29                | Inconsistent            | The most prevalent response is mixed outcomes (11 studies), perhaps as a result of reshuffling of who migrates within a household when a presence requirement is in place. |
| Targeting Children     | 29                | Inconsistent            | As children mostly do not migrate independently, immediate effects on migration outcomes are unlikely.   |
| Targeting women/ girls | 24                | Inconsistent            | There are no consistent migration outcomes for transfers targeting female beneficiaries.   |
| Targeting elderly      | 11                | Little consistency      | A number of studies suggest that benefits received by the elderly can be used to finance migration for another family member.  |
| Targeting extreme poor | 51                | Inconsistent            | When the poorest are targeted, transfer receipt does not necessarily lead to an increase in migration.   |

|                              |    |                    |  |
|------------------------------|----|--------------------|--|
| Targeting nationally         | 51 | Inconsistent       | Most studies do show an impact for nationally targeted programmes, split across a migration decrease, increase or mixed findings |
| Targeting specific regions   | 20 | Inconsistent       | There are no consistent patterns for when specific regions are targeted.   |
| Targeting rural regions only | 30 | Inconsistent       | A third of studies show a decrease, but on the whole findings are inconsistent.  |
| Transfer is low amount       | 14 | Inconsistent       | Findings are inconsistent, with no clear pattern for low transfers.  |
| Transfer is high amount      | 40 | Inconsistent       | Findings are inconsistent, with no clear pattern for high transfers.   |
| Monthly transfer             | 12 | Little consistency | There is a slight trend towards increases in migration, perhaps because regular transfers means burdensome administration.       |
| Regular, less than monthly   | 27 | Inconsistent       | The majority of studies have mixed findings.   |
| One-time transfer            | 18 | Inconsistent       | There are no consistent patterns.  |
| Transfer is paid on demand   | 6  | Little consistency | Most of the few studies for on-demand transfers (e.g. insurance) show that it reduces migration.                                 |

|                           |    |                    |  |
|---------------------------|----|--------------------|--|
| Cash transfers            | 20 | Little consistency | Most studies show an increase when the transfer is cash, particularly for non-conditional ones, perhaps being used to finance migration. |
| Mixed or non-cash benefit | 46 | Inconsistent       | Patterns on the whole are inconsistent, with mixed findings or decreases particularly common   |
| Implementation issues     | 7  | Inconsistent       | When there are implementation issues, studies find mostly no impact (3) or an increase in migration (2)                                  |

Note: Consistency of findings is assessed using the Shannon Information Criterion, which considers the evenness of the distribution across the four possible outcomes: 1) increase, 2) decrease, 3) mixed findings, 4) no impact. As such, 'no impact' is also considered an outcome. Studies that provide a greater level of disaggregation are more likely to end up in the mixed category. Factors are then classified from consistent (Shannon Information Criterion  $\leq 0.2$ ) in five equally sized categories to inconsistent (Shannon Information Criterion  $\geq 0.8$ ).

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The drivers of migration are complex, multi-layered and context-specific. Migration occurs when there is a desire for change, resulting from an environment with limited social and economic prospects, inequality, political and economic insecurity, conflict, violence and human rights abuses, amongst other factors (Aslany et al., 2021; Hagen-Zanker and Mallett, 2020). Such desire for change essentially arises from the need to manage a wide range of socioeconomic risks (Gagnon and Hagen-Zanker, 2019; Stark, 1991).

Migration is not the only response to a desire for change, however. In fact, the vast majority of people either do not aspire to migrate at all, or are “involuntarily immobile”, that is they do not have the capacity to do so (Carling and Schewel, 2018). The aspiration to migrate is therefore not a sufficient condition for migration to occur. Aspirations can only be realised when both the ability and capacity to migrate are present. That is access to social networks, funds, knowledge and skills to do so are available to a migrant (Carling, 2014, de Haas, 2010; de Haas, 2021).

As other options to migration exists, providing access to alternative livelihood opportunities and coping mechanisms may give people other ways to manage socio-economic risks. One policy area of particular interest in fostering an alternative route to migration is through social protection mechanisms, the range of publicly mandated actions that seek to address risk and vulnerability, often among poor and near-poor households, such as pensions, child benefits, unemployment benefits or public works programmes. Given the important role played by risk in the decision to migrate, access to such coping mechanisms can affect the decision to migrate (Hagen-Zanker et al., 2009; Sabates-Wheeler and Waite, 2003; Stecklov et al., 2005; OECD, 2017a).

Social protection was for a long-time generally limited to high-income countries, however, social protection mechanisms have expanded to low- and middle-income countries over the past decades, with most countries in the world now having at least one social protection programme. In fact, as of January 2022 more than 3,800 new social protection measures were registered worldwide since the COVID-19 pandemic began alone (Gentilini et al., 2022). Such expansion is also buoyed by closer attention provided to social protection by donor countries; through the SDGs 1 (no poverty - on social protection systems), 3 (good health - on universal health coverage), 8 (decent work and economic growth - on social protection for families) and 10 (reduced inequalities – on social protection policies) and the USP2030 agenda, a World Bank and ILO-led initiative to expand universal social protection globally. However, major gaps remain across the world as four billion people remain uncovered by any type of social protection (ILO, 2021).

As global expansion in social protection continues so will policy interest on the different, sometimes inadvertent, effects of such expansion. One of these potential effects is an interaction with migration decision-making, that is (not) accessing social protection may make it more/ less likely for (non) recipients to aspire and be able to migrate. There are many potential pathways for this interaction, discussed in the next section.

Identifying whether social protection programmes not only impact migration decisions, but also whether the induced migration is internal or international is of fundamental importance to policy, as it implies a different policy response. Internal migration, especially from rural to urban areas, may form part of a natural development pathway, consistent with the way most countries of the world have developed. Return and circular movements are easier and more likely in domestic settings. They may also reflect a more appropriate and efficient territorial distribution of population and may therefore be even encouraged or supported. In fact, some programmes are indeed designed with that in mind. International migration, on the other hand, implies that citizens leave the country altogether, and requires a more complex policy response to migration and development beyond one's borders, including protection, consular services, but also promoting diasporic ties with the development of the country through remittances, return and other types of engagement.

This literature review provides a comprehensive overview of how social protection programmes may influence migration outcomes, and an update to Hagen-Zanker and Himmelstine (2013). The review also complements an article by Adhikari and Gentilini (2018), which reviews 10 studies on *social assistance* that are specifically impact evaluations and one by Clemens (2022), which is particularly focused on conditional cash transfers.

More specifically the paper asks the question “*What are the effects of publicly mandated social protection programmes in countries of origin on migration?*”, considering migration decisions taken either by individuals or collectively at a household level. This paper provides a review of the relevant quantitative and qualitative English, French and Spanish literature in this area, focusing on the evidence in low-, lower-middle- and upper-middle income countries, which includes the 12 countries that are part of the Migration for Development and Equality (MIDEQ) project. As such, it provides the evidence base linking social protection and migration, before conducting novel primary data collection and analysis for the MIDEQ Hub.

This paper is organised as follows. Section 2 provides the analytical and theoretical framing on how social protection and migration decision-making may be linked. Section 3 presents the methodology used to review the literature, while Section 4 describes the evidence base, including by type of migration (internal, international, a

comparison of both, and temporary) and social protection programme (conditional and unconditional cash transfers, non-contributory pensions, social and health insurance, public works and employment guarantee schemes). Section 5 considers the factors that might mediate the link between social protection and migration, including those at the individual (education and skill-level, gender, ethnicity, and age) and household levels, contextual factors, and social protection programme design and implementation. The final section (6) concludes and draws out implications for policy and gaps in the literature.

## 2. ANALYTICAL FRAMING

Theoretical considerations and frameworks on migration decision-making have long evolved. The earliest frameworks focused on a combination of push factors (e.g., poverty, conflict, inequalities) and pull factors (e.g. earnings, job opportunities, better life conditions) (Ravenstein, 1889; Rossi, 1955; Harris and Todaro, 1970). In these models, individual willingness to bear risk, the utility gained from migration and the cost (real and otherwise) were (implicitly) considered part of decision-making. Social and other behavioural mechanisms were eventually weaved into these frameworks (Leslie and Richardson, 1961), but the frameworks notably remained theorised at the individual level. The notion of economic decision-making was expanded to include economic stability and risk. In the 1980s, a series of influential papers began theorising migration decisions as complex and weaving several social and economic factors at the individual but also household and community levels (Stark, 1991). More recently, the literature has focused on the subjective and intangible aspects of decision-making, including the role of feelings, perceptions, relationships and social networks (Hagen-Zanker and Hennessey, 2021) and the instrumental (means-to-an-end) and intrinsic (direct wellbeing) roles of migration (de Haas, 2021).

At its core, migration results from individual or household-level desire for change (Carling and Talleraas, 2016). Figure 1 illustrates a simplified causal chain of individual and household migration decision-making. The framework reflects the nature of migration as a desire for change. Desire for change may stem from limited prospects and economic opportunities or adverse circumstances in one's own direct environment, such as political and economic insecurity, conflict, violence and abuse. Such desire for change may then lead to migration, although it is not the only possible response.

Furthermore, aspirations can only be realised when aspiring migrants have the ability and capacity to migrate (Carling, 2014, de Haas, 2010). This includes having the financial means, family support, a social network that can provide information and other means of support, access to migration intermediaries (see Jones and Sha, 2020) and clear pathways for safe, regular and orderly migration. In fact, at the cross-country level we see an inverted u-shape between out-migration and income



(Clemens, 2020). Migration is highest middle-income countries, with potential migrants in low-income country having more limited capacity to migrate and those in high-income countries having lower aspirations to migrate. This relates to the broader body of literature on credit constraints and migration that is summarised in Box 1.

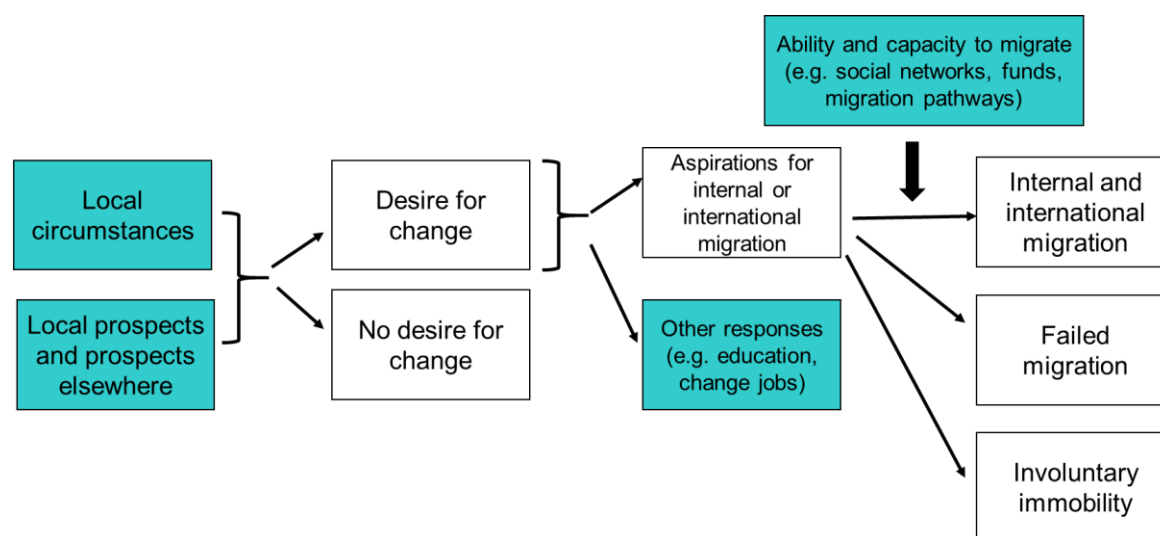
### **BOX 1. THE LITERATURE ON CREDIT CONSTRAINTS AND MIGRATION**

A related body of research focuses on market failures that could be overcome via migration. It has included, amongst others, credit and liquidity constraints (Stark, 1991; Rapoport, 2002), such as constraints driven by policies in other potential destination countries (Marchal and Naiditch, 2016). Financial constraints prevent lower skilled individuals from migrating, and therefore relaxing such constraints may increase the rate of migration (Chiquiar and Hanson, 2005). In fact, when credit is unavailable, wealth has a non-linear effect on migration, first increasing and then decreases it (McKenzie and Rapoport, 2007), as also seen at the cross-country level. The financial constraint tied to migration can lead to important effects on the self-selection of migrants, and explains why migrants typically select from the middle of the educational and wealth distributions in the country of origin (Assuncao and Carvalho, 2010).

The fact that higher earnings or wealth in households living in developing countries can either increase the opportunity cost of migration or relax financial constraints has led to several empirical studies investigating which one of these channels is empirically more viable, if any. These include studies on social protection programmes and other interventions. For instance, studies have found that randomized access to a microcredit program increases internal migration in China (Cai, 2020), that access to credit plays an important role in male migration in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh (Singh, 2018), as well as in Viet Nam (Phan, 2012) and Mexico (Gorlach, 2019). Credit constraints may also alter migration dynamics in other ways, including by reducing the duration of migration episodes (Gorlach, 2019). Not all studies demonstrate financial constraints as being binding for migration, however. A study on the age of mass migration (1850-1914) from Europe to the United States showed that increases in parental wealth and expected inheritance actually discouraged migration (Abramitzky et al., 2012).

Social protection can potentially ‘disrupt’ this causal chain. Figure 1 highlights several areas where social protection may interact with the migration decision-making chain (teal boxes). In fact, access to social protection may increase or decrease the likelihood of migration.

## FIG 1. HOW INDIVIDUALS AND HOUSEHOLDS MAKE DECISIONS ON MIGRATION



Source: Author elaboration of Carling and Talleraas (2016).

Note: Teal boxes highlight areas where social protection may influence migration behaviour.

Social protection can interact with the migration decision-making chain in a number of different ways; it may increase or decrease the likelihood of migration. Social protection can stabilise incomes and reduce risk, thus helping individuals and households manage socio-economic shocks (Gagnon and Hagen-Zanker, 2019). A reduction in risk and better economic stability can in turn reduce or prevent a desire for change, and thus reduce aspirations to migrate.

Social protection can also affect aspirations for migration in other, indirect, ways. For example, in the medium to long-term it can lead to an increase in household member's education, nutrition and health levels. As such, social protection might also affect individual aspirations, principally when programmes increase education levels and along with aspirations for better life conditions and success. When this process overlaps with the existence of substantial differences in spatial opportunities, aspirations to migrate may increase (De Haas, 2010; 2021).

Gaining access to social protection can provide an alternative or a complementary strategy to a desire for change. Whether social protection is viewed as an alternative to migration depends on the extent it is viewed as complementary or substitutable to migration. These impacts are moderated in turn by the design of the social protection programme (for instance, its scope and adequacy, whether it is conditional or unconditional, its ease of access).

When seen as complementary to migration, the availability of social protection can present an opportunity cost for migration, as access to social protection could be lost when migrating (Stecklov et al., 2005). When viewed as a direct substitute for the

absence of social protection, income gained from migration replace formal pensions, when effective retirement provisions are not available (Sana & Massey, 2000). This debate is illustrated by the literature on social protection and remittances (see Box 2), where studies have observed that social protection could lead to a reduction in remittances, or not where both incomes could complement each other.

## BOX 2. IMPACT OF SOCIAL PROTECTION ON REMITTANCES

Social protection can also interact with other dimensions of migration, in particular remittances. Social protection and remittances can be seen as substitutes; both transfers help households deal with shocks and risks (Hagen-Zanker and Himmelstine, 2015). Of particular interest to policy-makers is the question of whether the provision of social protection ‘crowds out’ (leads to a reduction in) remittances. The evidence is quite mixed in this regard. There may be some crowding out effects, for example a study on Vietnam shows that the provision of public transfers crowds out altruistically motivated domestic and international remittances (Hai Anh and Ying, 2017) and a review study on low and middle income countries finds considerable evidence of crowding out across the 29 studies reviewed (Nicolov and Bonci, 2020). Another study argues that Puerto Ricans in the USA send fewer remittances to relatives back home, compared to other Latin-American immigrants, because of the wide-ranging public benefits provided in Puerto Rico (Duany, 2010). Finally, a study on Colombia shows that the receipt of remittances facilitates receiving households’ participation in contributory social insurance (Cuadros-Meñaca, 2019).

Social protection can help lift the financial barrier that limits the ability to migrate. Migration is costly, and many individuals and households may not be able to overcome the associated financial constraint (see also Box 1). Social protection helps overcome such constraints in direct and indirect ways. They help directly when financial transfers provide the individual or household with fungible funds, thus increasing the household budget, and providing the ability to finance migration journeys. They may also help indirectly, when household savings saved by not spending on health, education or other social needs, can contribute to the ability by the household to channel funds towards financing migration.

The way these interactions takes place also depends on *whether* and *how* individuals use and are knowledgeable of social protection policies. Individuals may not, for instance, be aware of policies or programmes, have incomplete or incorrect information or respond to them in unexpected ways (Hagen-Zanker and Mallett, 2022).

The provision of social protection can therefore have either positive or negative impacts on the decision-making and the likelihood of internal and international

migration. This paper documents such impacts, and attempts to disentangle the ways in which social protection and migration interact. It also pays attention to the contextual, individual and household factors that mediate this interaction.

### 3. REVIEW METHODOLOGY

The scope of the paper encompasses both *internal* and *international* migration, in and from low-, lower-middle and upper-middle income countries, undertaken for any reason (e.g. forced, economic, family, study), although migration undertaken under certain circumstances, such as conflict, are not necessarily taken within a framework consistent with the choices illustrated in Figure 1.

This literature review focuses on empirical studies that study the effects of publicly mandated social protection programmes<sup>1</sup> in countries of origin on: 1) the individual or household propensity to migrate and 2) aggregate migration flows from low-, lower-middle and upper-middle income countries. The scope includes studies that explored the following potential migration outcomes: 1) aspirations to emigrate, 2) actual emigration, 3) the decision to return, 4) the decision to undertake secondary migration after an initial move within the country or to another country (step-migration), and 5) the decision to migrate again, upon return, after having done so previously.

The paper examines studies on publicly mandated social protection programmes only, considering both de facto and de jure access to social protection, including cash transfers, public works programmes, health insurance, health fee waivers, unemployment insurance, school subsidies or fee waivers, and asset transfers. The paper covers individual or household level awareness and receipt of social protection programmes, but not the effects of community or national coverage.

The review process was based on a rigorous, evidence-focused literature review methodology, building on the methodology originally developed in Hagen-Zanker and Mallett (2013). A search protocol was set up and a formal literature search was conducted using predefined search strings to explore three academic databases, seven academic journals and 16 websites/search engines (see Annex 1 for a list). The authors also consulted four experts in the field, which increased the number of documents for consideration. Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods studies were also considered.

The review was conducted from October to December 2020, building on a previous study authored by Hagen-Zanker and Himmelstine (2013).<sup>2</sup> The study places particular emphasis on studies published since the 2013 review<sup>3</sup>. Additional

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<sup>1</sup> Publicly mandated means that requirements are listed in law or public regulations; programmes may, however, be carried out by public or private entities.

<sup>2</sup> The studies reviewed in 2013 are also included in the current review.

<sup>3</sup> Studies published before 2013 were also included, if they were not covered in the 2013 review, but the search algorithm was not focused on the period preceding 2013.

searches in both French and Spanish were also included, to grasp a wider range of studies.

All studies that fit the search criteria were included without further assessment of their quality, with the exception of studies that had no or limited information on methodology and data sources, which were excluded, see Box 3. The study includes academic articles, reports and dissertations. While most literature covered is written in English, two studies were found written in Spanish and one study in French. It is possible that some relevant studies may have been missed in other languages that are not included in English language journals, databases or websites. However, once the search methodology reached a point of saturation (i.e., were repeatedly identifying the same documents), the authors were confident that the review would represent a good sample of the relevant literature. An additional caveat is that of the built-in subjectivity of the methodology. Studies were classified as per the interpretation of the researchers who coded and analysed the data. While this opens a certain amount of subjectivity in the study, challenging cases were extensively discussed across the research team.

### **BOX 3. METHODOLOGICAL AND DATA CHOICES ACROSS THE LITERATURE**

This review includes all studies that met the inclusion criteria, with no further screening based on methodology or quality of studies, apart from studies with no or limited information on methodology and data sources, as mentioned above. While not the focus of this review it is clear that methodological choices by authors can and do determine findings. Sampling choices, for example, are important. For example, in the case of Oportunidades, some quantitative studies (Angelucci, 2004; Stecklov et al., 2005) presented the results of six out of 32 states mainly located in the central part of the country, ignoring those states – like Oaxaca and Chiapas – with a more longstanding history of migration and particularly high levels of poverty (Azuara, 2009). Length of exposure to a programme is critical, so when data was collected, and time period covered can also affect findings. Studies may compare different components of programmes, or programmes at different point in time, with transfer levels or other design parameters differing. Where authors explicitly mention these methodological choices, we have included them in our analysis, but we have not sought out additional information on methodology or assessed relevance and rigour of methodological choices.

The search protocol replicated in Annex 1 resulted in 76 studies that explicitly examine the impact of social protection on migration decision-making, migration outcomes or aggregate migration flows, from low-, lower-middle and upper-middle income countries. The search for relevant literature yielded more quantitative studies

(56 studies) than qualitative studies (11) and mixed methods studies (9). The next section describes the findings.

## 4. FINDINGS

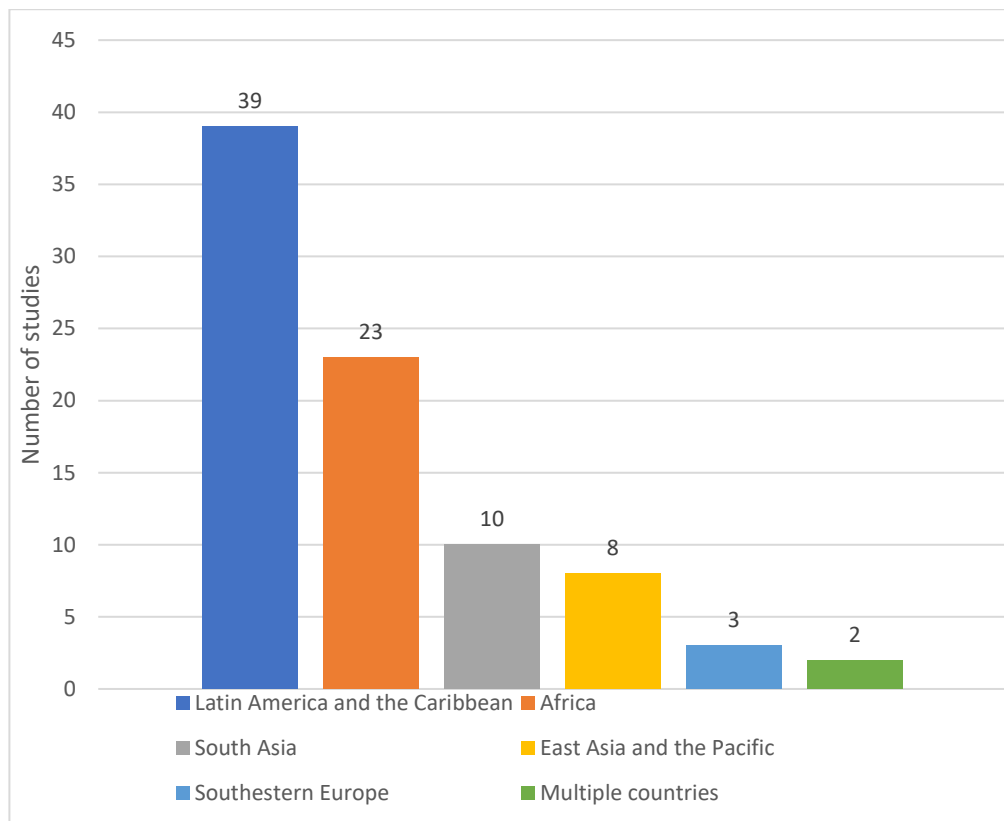
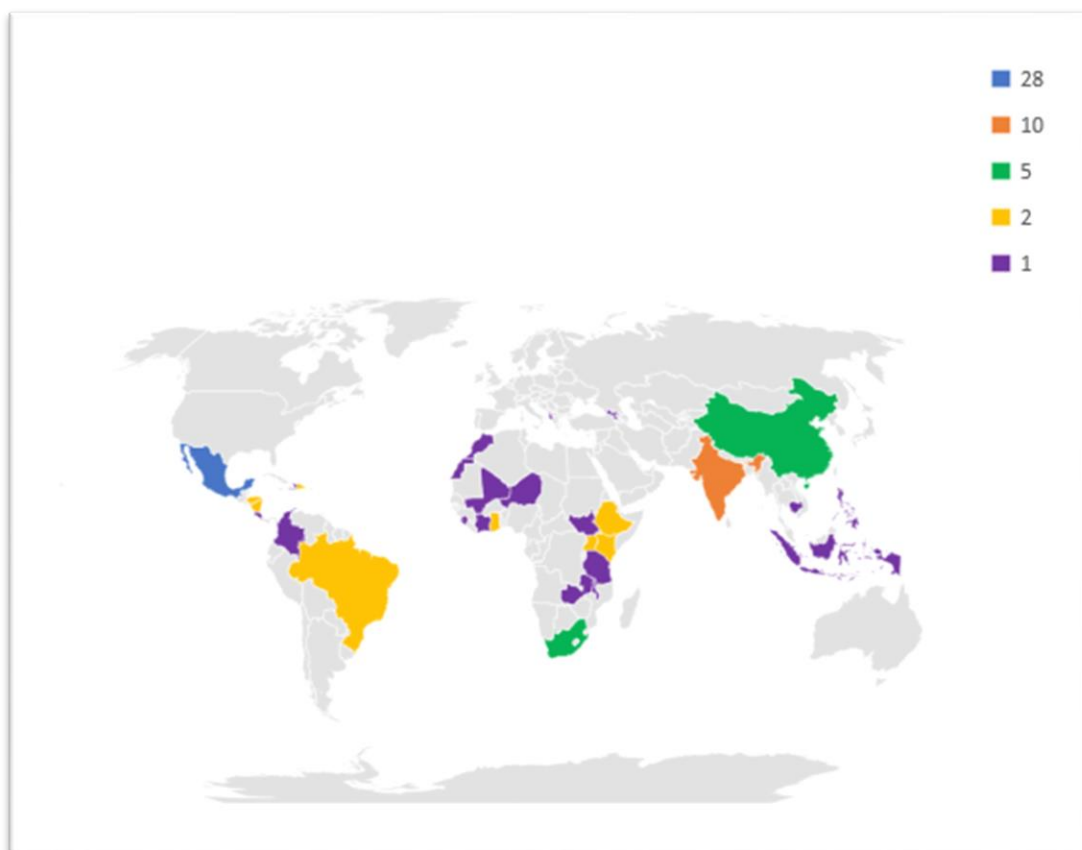
### 4.1 OVERVIEW OF THE EVIDENCE BASE

Since the Hagen-Zanker and Himmelstine review in 2013, many additional empirical papers have been published, expanding the evidence base from 29 to 76 studies. Annex 2 provides a summary of all relevant studies in this area that were retrieved in our search process.

Figure 2 illustrates the geographical distribution of the studies reviewed in this paper. It shows a strong concentration of studies in the Latin American and the Caribbean region (39 studies) followed by Africa (23 studies), South Asia (10 studies), East Asia and the Pacific (8 studies), Southwestern Europe (3 study), and two studies looking at the effects of access to social protection on multiple countries<sup>4</sup>. Within Africa, studies from East, West and Southern Africa are relatively well represented. This is consistent with trends in social protection programming over the past decade, with both a growing implementation of social protection programmes globally, particularly in the African region (Andrews et al., 2018). Within Latin America and the Caribbean, studies are well covered across North, South America and Central America, reflecting the numerous evaluations that have been conducted in the continent on conditional cash transfers (CCTs) since their inception from the late 1990s (Molina Millán et al., 2019). Figure 3 shows the geographic distribution of the evidence on a global scale. It highlights the extent to which studies are dominated by evidence from Mexico (28 studies), India (10), South Africa (5) and China (5 studies), which together account for more than half of the studies reviewed.

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<sup>4</sup> Number of countries do not sum to 76 as some studies assessed more than one country, and countries in several regions.

**FIG 2. REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF STUDIES****FIG 3. GLOBAL DISTRIBUTION OF STUDIES**

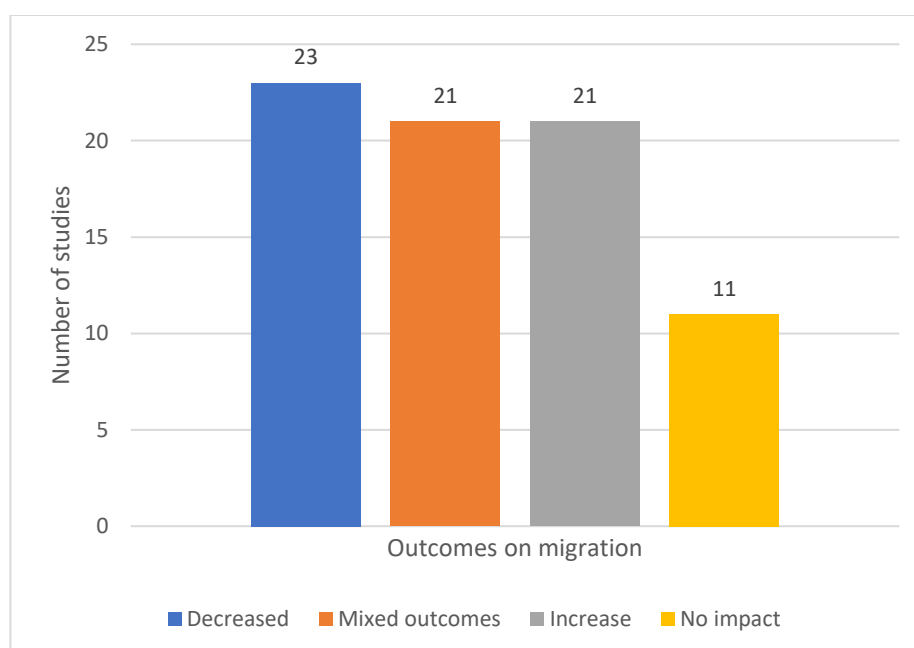


In comparison to studies covered in the previous review by Hagen-Zanker and Himmelstine (2013), the studies have evolved to include a greater focus on internal migration than before (see section 1.2.1).

Regarding the type of social protection programmes assessed, the majority of studies considered impacts from conditional cash transfers (CCTs) (33 studies), followed by employment guarantee schemes (17 studies), non-contributory pensions (9 studies), social and health insurance (8 studies), unconditional cash transfers (UCTs) (7 studies), and two studies examining the effects of various social protection schemes on migration.

Taken together, the studies do not paint a clear picture. In fact, the most common finding from the studies was itself one of mixed outcomes: **23 studies find that access to social protection programmes have decreased migration, 21 studies find that it has mixed outcomes<sup>5</sup>, 21 studies find that it increases migration, while another 11 find that social protection programmes have no (statistically significant) impact on migration (see Figure 4).**

**FIG 4. SOCIAL PROTECTION IMPACT ON MIGRATION**



<sup>5</sup> We are classifying mixed outcomes studies as those that show a combination of impacts. For example, those that found different migration outcomes over different periods of time (e.g. increase in the short-term and decrease in the long-term), increase for some members of the household and decrease for others, different outcomes between demographic groups (men and women, youths and older), or between regions, amongst other mixed outcomes.



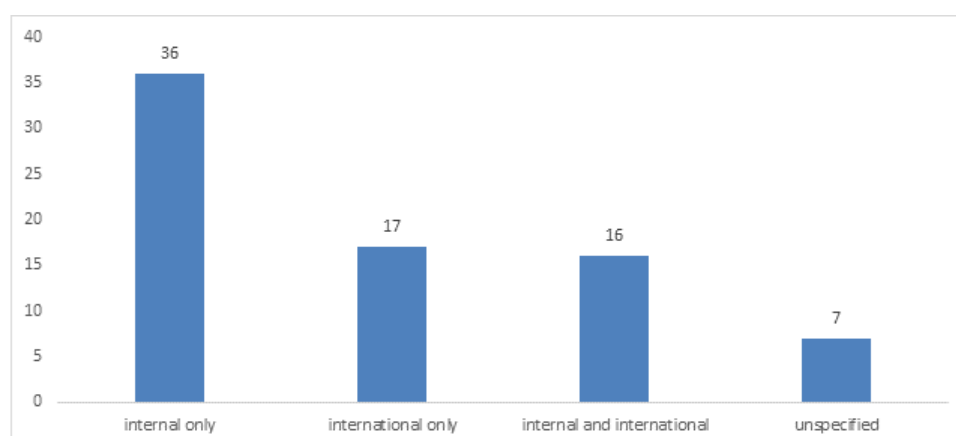
This differs from the earlier conclusions in Hagen-Zanker and Himmelstine (2013), where slightly more studies found that social protection increases migration, although the evidence base was also mixed. Even within country, or across the same programme, the evidence is mixed. If we look at the country- or programme-level, the effects on migration are not straightforward. For example, in the case of the formerly named Mexican Progresa/Oportunidades/Prospera/ (from now on Oportunidades) conditional cash transfer programme, the evidence is itself divided: 11 studies find mixed outcomes, 4 study finds an increase in migration, 3 studies find a decrease in migration and 2 studies find no impact. This could be due in part to contextual factors and the methodology of studies, as we will show below.

The next section unpacks the findings and analyses the evidence by type and timing of migration flows and type of social protection programme.

## 4.2 BY TYPE OF MIGRATION

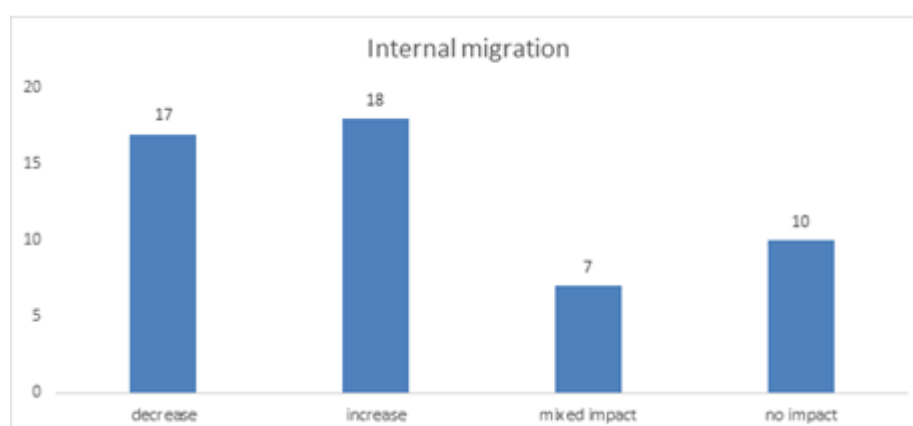
This section provides an overview of migration outcomes by type of migration. The studies reviewed in this paper feature both internal (domestic) and international migration (crossing of an international border), and on occasion, whether migration was temporary, such as in circular and agricultural migration patterns.

Of the 76 papers reviewed, 36 papers (or nearly half, 47%) studied or found links between social protection and internal migration, whereas 17 papers found links with international migration. As internal migration is more common, globally, than international migration, it is unsurprising that there are more studies on the subject of social protection and migration focusing on internal movements. An additional 16 papers, found links with both internal and international migration, and seven papers did not specify whether migration was internal or international (Figure 5). Overall, this results in an overall base of 52 studies on internal migration (36+16 both types of migration), and another 33 studies on international migration (17+16 both types of migration), when studies concerning both types are included. Of the 76 papers reviewed, 25 have explored temporary migration (see section 4.2.4)

**FIG 5. NUMBER OF STUDIES BY TYPE OF MIGRATION**

### 4.2.1 INTERNAL MIGRATION

The conclusions of the studies on internal migration are highly mixed. While 17 studies described a decrease in internal migration, a nearly equal number of 18 described an increase. Seven studies described a mixed impact of both increases and decreases based on a number of specific factors, and 10 described situations where there was no impact (Figure 6). Moreover, the results do not seem to be related to a specific country context or event nor the level of urbanisation or history of internal migration.

**FIG 6. THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL PROTECTION ON INTERNAL MIGRATION**

The fact that many studies conclude that there is an impact, irrespective of whether that impact is an increase or decrease in internal migration, is not unexpected. Internal migration, more so than international migration, is typically associated with a shift of poorer, less productive individuals, nationally speaking, to areas of higher productivity (Hagen-Zanker, 2008). As social protection typically targets poorer households, one would therefore expect the migration dynamic to be high for internal migration.

Within the group of studies concluding a decrease in internal migration, some of the papers are focused on countries where the share of the population living in an urban

area is relatively high already, such as China (Li et al., 2018) and Brazil (Da Mota Silveria Neto, 2008). In the context of rural-to-urban migration, the rate of growth of urbanisation decreases as it converges towards 100%. In other words, we should expect a higher rate of migration in countries with lower rates of urbanisation. However, there are also several countries in which urbanisation rates are relatively low, concluding a decrease in migration. This is the case for nearly all the studies on India's NREGA programme (Imbert and Papp, 2020; National Federation of Indian Women, 2008; Papp, 2012; Parida, 2016; Deshingkar et al., 2010; Ravi et al., 2012), as well as for studies on Ethiopia (Hoddinott et al., 2020) and Uganda (Oryema, 2006). The conclusions on the NREGA programme are in fact particularly consistent in this manner. For the two African countries, this may be due to the fact that rural-to-urban migration is not the only common, or even typical, type of internal movement in these countries – and therefore the level of urbanisation in the country factors little in the dynamic between migration and social protection. Rural-to-rural migration may be common in contexts of agricultural and seasonal demands.

A small window of consistency was found with respect to studies on South Africa, which all concluded an increase with respect to the national pension programme (Posel et al., 2006; Sienaert, 2007; Sinaert, 2008; Inder and Maitra, 2004; Ardington et al., 2009). There is also some consistency on Mexico, as three studies conclude an increase in relation to the Oportunidades programme (Parker and Volg, 2018; Rubalcava and Teruel, 2006; Aguilar et al., 2019).

In contrast to the study by Li et al. (2018), which concludes a decrease, three studies conclude an increase in China, in relation to the impact of the Chinese pension scheme (Chen, 2016; Eggleston et al., 2018) as well as the Chinese public works programme (Chau et al., 2012). There does not seem to be any link between urbanisation rates once again, as increases in internal migration were concluded in Sierra Leone (Rosas and Sabarwal., 2016) and Mali (Hidrobo et al., 2020), where urbanisation rates are low, as well as in Indonesia (Tiwari and Winters, 2019), where urbanisation rates are high.

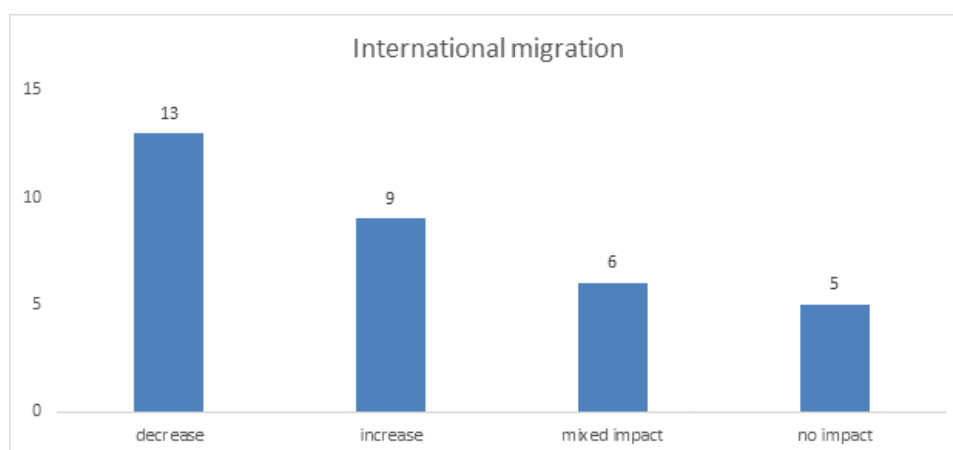
Looking more specifically at studies that investigated both internal and international migration does not clarify any common conclusion either. Amongst those studies, there were six studies on Mexico, three of which concluded an increase in internal migration (Mahe, 2020; Tirado-Alcazar, 2014; De la Rocha, 2009), and three conclude a decrease (Gil-Garcia, 2016; Gil-Garcia, 2019; Hughes, 2019). Other studies do not shed any more of a pattern, as studies on Albania (Hagen-Zanker et al., 2009) and Honduras (Molina et al., 2020) concluded a decrease, while a study on Nicaragua concluded an increase in internal migration (Barham et al., 2018).

## 4.2.2 INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

The expectations regarding an impact on international migration in light of social protection programmes are less straightforward than they are for internal migration. International migration is costlier and requires more preparation and therefore positive self-selection of individuals and households (assets, education, skills, networks) undertaking international migration is slightly higher than it is for internal migration. As social protection typically targets poor households, it is not clear whether the benefits of social protection can help overcome financial and budget constraints, and influence international migration.

The conclusions suggest that social protection programmes do indeed influence international migration, but they do not offer much more clarity or consistency than they did for internal migration. Of the 33 studies investigating international migration, relatively fewer conclude a decrease (9) rather than an increase (13), while six conclude a mixed impact and five no impact at all (Figure 7). The conclusions do not seem related to migration history, proximity to job-rich countries, migration rates, or any specific event.

**FIG 7. THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL PROTECTION ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**



In a bid for consistency, two major studies use macro data from a cross-country dataset, focusing exclusively on global international migration and find a decrease in international migration (Greenwood et al., 1999 and Greenwood and McDowell, 2011).

In addition, several of the studies focused on migration from Mexico to the US conclude a decrease in international migration, including on the Oportunidades programme (Gonzalez-Konig and Wodon, 2005; Sana and Hu, 2007), Fonden Insurance Scheme (Chort and de la Rupelle, 2019) and Procampo programme (Chort and de la Rupelle, 2019; Cuecuecha and Scott, 2009), further cementing some sort of consistency. Another study concluding a fall in international migration

looks at the Philippines and its Pantawid ng Pamilyang Pilipino Programme (OECD, 2017b).

However, just like for internal migration, there are also several studies concluding increases in migration as well, including a different study on Procampo in Mexico (Cortina, 2014), the Ti Manman Cheri programme in Haiti (OECD, 2017d), the Comorian Social Safety Net Programme (SSNP) (Gazeaud et al., 2019) and a cash-for-food programme in Cambodia (OECD, 2017c).

Amongst the studies that looked at both international and internal migration, the conclusions on international migration are not any clearer. While four studies conclude a decrease in international migration from Mexico (Gil-Garcia, 2016; Gil-Garcia, 2019; Hughes, 2019; Stecklov et al., 2005), three of them conclude an increase (De la Rocha, 2009; Angelucci, 2004; Angelucci, 2013). Furthermore, a study concludes a decrease in Albania (Hagen-Zanker et al., 2009), whereas other studies conclude an increase in international migration from Honduras (Molina et al., 2020) and Nicaragua (Barham et al., 2018).

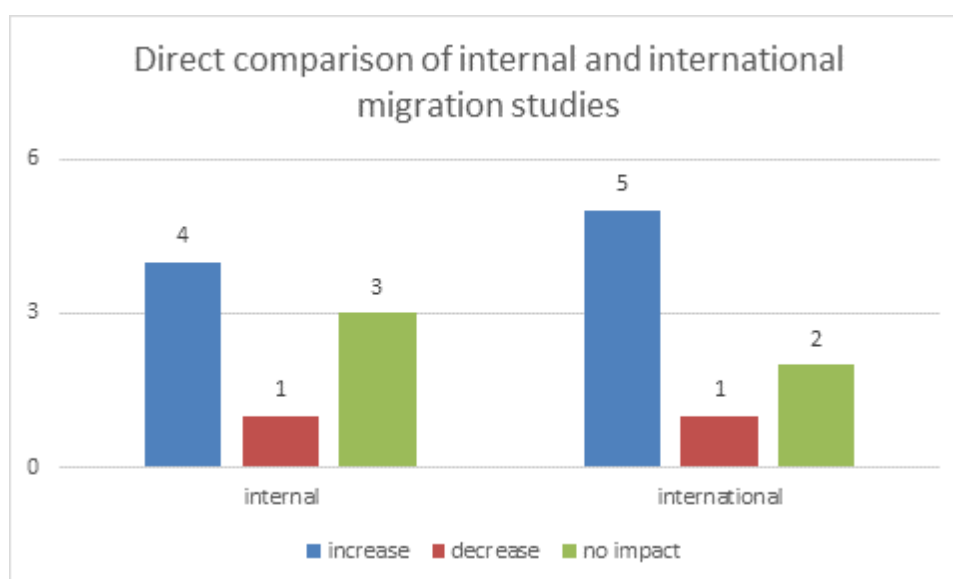
### 4.2.3 COMPARING INTERNAL AND INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

A major issue with the comparisons and conclusions made above is that it is difficult to isolate the comparison between internal and international migration. Several studies focus on one or the other, and the studies that look at both often do so jointly, without necessarily identifying separate effects for both.

This section looks at the studies that consider both internal and international migration using the same datasets, and that also separately look at whether social programmes affected one differently or in the same way as the other.

Studies that fell into these criteria totalled eight, which is a low number on which to base the analysis. The conclusions do however point to a potential difference. As shown in Figure 8, there were noticeably more studies showing an increase in both internal and international migration (four for internal migration and five for international migration) when focusing on this particular sub-set of the literature. However, what this shows is that social protection programmes may influence an increase in migration, regardless of whether it is internal or international, and does not conclude a difference between internal or international migration itself.

**FIG 8. THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL PROTECTION ON BOTH INTERNAL AND INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

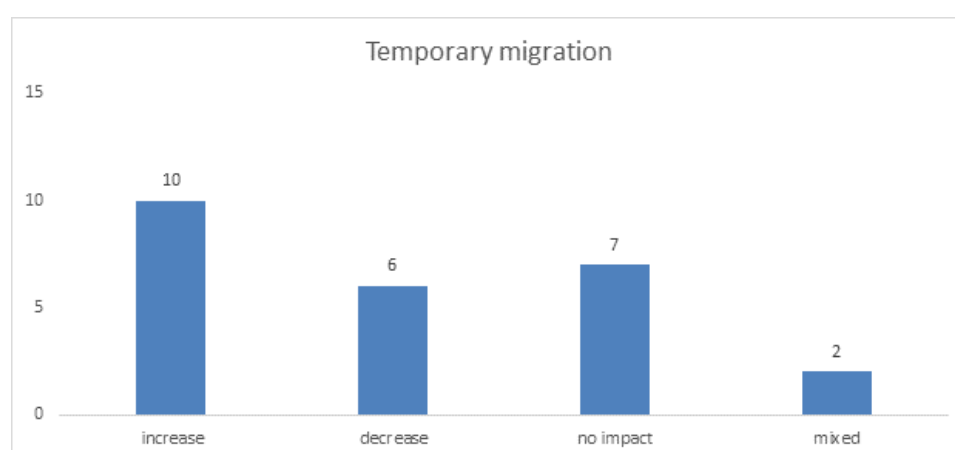


#### 4.2.4 TEMPORARY MIGRATION

In addition to whether social programmes induced internal or international migration is the question of whether it was a temporary form of migration. One supposition is that social programmes may help overcome financial constraints that allow for temporary migration to gain a salary somewhere else, but then return home afterwards, perhaps even repeatedly.

Few studies explicitly focus on temporary migration. Part of the reason is that it is difficult to measure whether migration is temporary or not, also in part due to a lack of a transversally used definition. When does migration become temporary? The international statistical standard suggests a three- to twelve-month cut-off, but this is not what independent researchers may necessarily use. Moreover, when a migrant has left for less than three months, one cannot know whether the migration will be temporary or not. Nevertheless, the studies included in this category include those mentioning migration that is circular, temporary, seasonal or short-term, and whether there was return migration - with the caveat that the counterfactual is not always consistent. Typically, such studies are undertaken in a context where temporary migration is common.

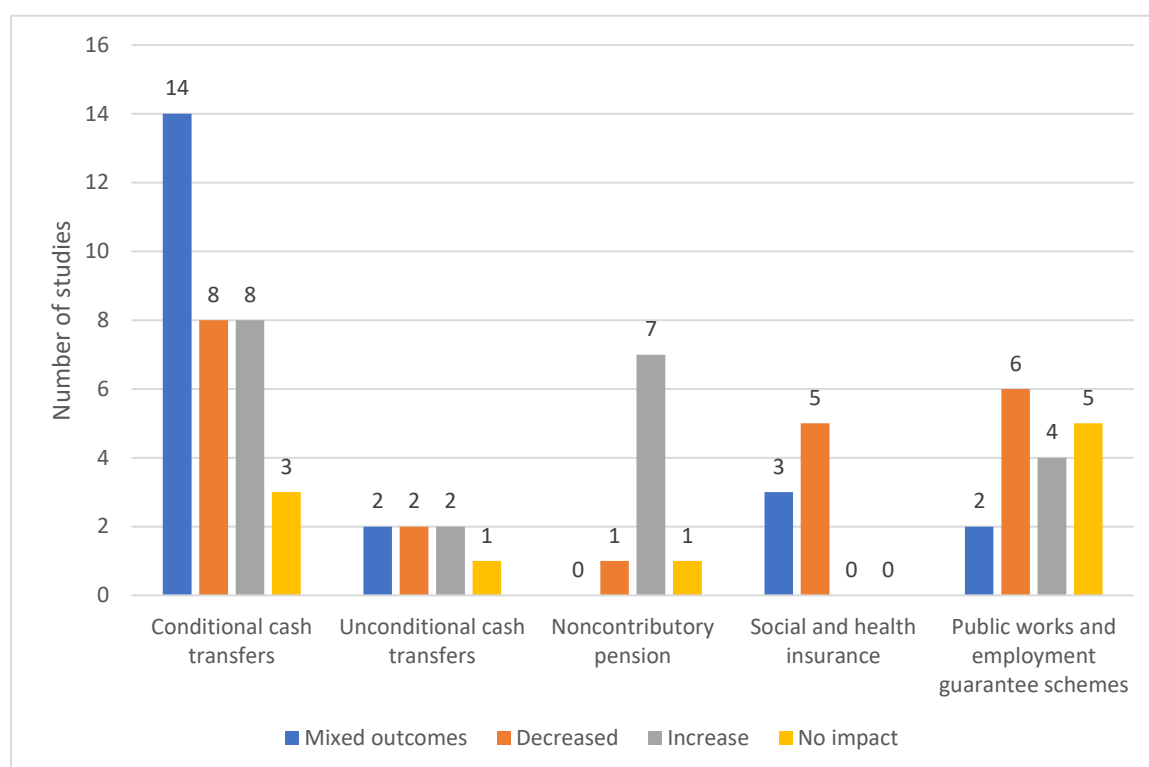
The studies conclude a higher incidence of temporary migration in light of social protection, rather than a lower one. Altogether, there were 25 studies that mentioned a temporary migration context, with ten concluding an increase, six a decrease, seven no impact at all, and two suggesting a mix of impacts (Figure 9).

**FIG 9. THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL PROTECTION ON TEMPORARY MIGRATION**

Breaking the analysis on temporary migration further down by international and internal migration reveals a much more consistent conclusion, particularly on international migration where there is a marked difference in terms studies suggested an increase in light of a social protection programme (six), compared to only two suggesting a decrease, and two others concluding no impact. In terms of internal migration, there are no conclusive differences between studies that show an increase (four), those that show a decrease or mixed outcomes (two). In fact, the largest number of studies showed that there was no impact on temporary migration (five).

### 4.3 BY TYPE OF SOCIAL PROTECTION

The reviewed studies consider five distinct types of social protection programmes and the findings are summarised in Figure 10 and discussed below.

**FIG 10. SOCIAL PROTECTION IMPACT ON MIGRATION BY TYPE OF SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMME**

### 4.3.1 CONDITIONAL CASH TRANSFERS

Looking at five different CCTs, all of which are based in Latin America, the studies find a variety of impacts (see Figure 10). About half of the studies show an increase in migration (8 studies) or a decrease (8 studies), while the other half of the studies find that access to CCTs have mixed outcomes on the propensity to migrate (e.g. during different periods of time or producing different kinds of migration flows). Three studies found no impact.

In Mexico, Procampo (which targets agricultural producers), increased household income of poor households and thus relaxed budgetary constraints, allowing beneficiaries or their household members to cover some of the initial costs associated with migration to the United States (Cortina, 2014); (iii) the conditions fail to keep *all* household members at home. In Nicaragua, for example, the RPS transfer enabled migration of male adults – not constrained by any of the conditions – during times of crisis (Winters et al., 2005); iv) improvements in human capital of former beneficiaries in the long-term. For instance, beneficiaries of the RPS in Nicaragua (Barham et al., 2018) and the Oportunidades in Mexico (Azuara, 2009) migrated after having acquired more years of education; v) supporting financial



independence: the transfer enables young couples to form their own households (Aguilar et al., 2019).

In contrast, seven other studies find a decrease in the propensity to migrate. It appears that the conditions attached to the programme may reduce migration (Behrman, Parker, & Todd, 2008; Gonzalez-Konig and Wondon, 2005; Stecklov et al., 2005). In the cases where the transfer was deemed high enough, migration also decreased; for example, for Bolsa Familia beneficiaries in Brazil (De Oliveira and Chagas, 2018; Silveira-Neto and Azzoni, 2008) and Procampo beneficiaries in Mexico (Cuecuecha and Scott, 2009; Gonzalez-Konig and Wodon, 2005). Similarly, in the case of Honduras, Winters et al. (2006) suggests that young adults between the ages of 15 and 29 could afford to leave their households and form new ones within the locality as a result of the Family Assistance Programme (PRAF). CCTs also reduced migration by providing a buffer during natural hazards such as droughts (Chort and de la Rupelle, 2019).

It is far from clear whether CCTs increase or decrease the propensity to migrate, even when looking at one single programme. The formerly named Oportunidades programme offers a good example. Oportunidades was a CCT in Mexico (running from 1997 to 2019) that provided a cash transfer to households with children, if households ensured regular school attendance and visits to health clinics. Several studies have found that while in the short-term Oportunidades reduced the migration of beneficiaries or their household members receiving the educational component, in the long-term their propensity to migrate increased to partake in higher education or to find better-remunerated jobs when the economic conditions in the area of origin did not improve (de la Rocha, 2009; Himmelstine, 2017; Parker and Vogl, 2018). Outcomes are also mixed in terms of the kinds of migration. The results provided by Angelucci (2004, 2013) showed that Oportunidades reduced credit constraints for households that otherwise would have not been able to migrate to the United States. The same study of Angelucci (2013) found no impact on internal migration because it is a less-expensive investment. Oportunidades also had mixed outcomes on different members of the household. While some direct beneficiaries (children and mothers) did not migrate, other members of the household not bounded by the physical conditions, did migrate (Gil-Garcia, 2019; Himmelstine, 2017; Hughes, 2019; Ishikawa, 2014).

### 4.3.2 UNCONDITIONAL CASH TRANSFERS

The evidence on UCTs is geographically diverse with studies from China, Indonesia and five different African countries. The evidence is less clear cut, as shown in Figure 10. Migration increases in some cases by easing credit constraints, as observed with the Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Kenya (Soares, 2011) and the Bantuan Langsung Tunai programme in Indonesia (Tiwari and Winters, 2019). In contrast, migration decreased by improving the living conditions of

the household as observed in China (Howell, 2019). In South Sudan the *expectation* to receive cash combined with business and life skills training reduced migration of young women, although the cash was then not disbursed due to the intensification of violence in the country (Muller et al., 2019).

For two studies, the evidence is mixed. In Mali, the Filets Sociaux (Jigisémèjiri) programme *increased* internal migration of men by reducing credit constraints, but *reduced* migration of women from vulnerable households (Hidrobo et al., 2020). In Zambia, the Child Grant Programme decreased short-distance migration of men from wealthier households during periods of extreme heat when agricultural or service labour opportunities for these households reduce, while the cash smooths consumption needs. At the same time, the programme increased migration of men during cool periods, irrespective of their wealth, due to households taking advantage of a regular income source that allow a household member to migrate under normal climate conditions (Mueller et al., 2020).

For two other UCTs in Africa, access to the cash transfers seems to have had little impact on the decision to migrate (Deshingkar et al., 2015; Sibson, 2011).

### 4.3.3 NON-CONTRIBUTORY PENSIONS

In terms of non-contributory pension, there is only evidence on China, South Africa and Uganda from nine studies, with seven showing an increase in internal migration. Five examine the Old Age Grant scheme in South Africa, which is a non-contributory pension for older persons. All five studies in the review show that the Old Age Grant led to an *increase* in internal migration by members of the household of a pensioner. The cash transfer made internal migration affordable to a member of these households, particularly for working age women, as long as other members provide care of the children in the household (Inder and Maitra, 2004; Posel et al., 2006).

In a study on China, evidence on the NRPS, a non-contributory pension for persons aged 60 or above, is mixed. Some studies find that access to the pension scheme is linked with higher internal migration of the beneficiaries' adult children since pensioners can afford medical services and rely less upon support and care from their children. However, it is still unclear whether migration increases when the pensioner is in good (Chen, 2016) or in poor health (Eggleston et al., 2018). Another study found that the NRPS reduces migration of adult children because the cash reduces the pensioner's farming intensity, particularly amongst men, and increases the time spent in agriculture by adult children (Li et al., 2018).

The Ugandan Senior Citizen Grant, which targets persons aged 65 years and above, has had no impact on the propensity to migrate of other household members since the transfer is too small and highly unreliable (Walsham, 2020).

### 4.3.4 SOCIAL AND HEALTH INSURANCE

The evidence on social and health insurance suggests that generally the higher the coverage is in the country of origin, the less there is a need to migrate. A number of macro-economic studies on access to social insurance in several countries (e.g. Greenwood et al., 1999; OECD, 2017a), as well as in-depth studies on social insurance programmes in Mexico and Albania (Hagen-Zanker et al., 2009; Sana and Hu, 2007; Sana and Massey, 2000), find that an increase in social insurance coverage is linked to a decrease in migration. Those with social insurance coverage stay because they have jobs with benefits that were worth keeping. One exception is OECD's (2017a) finding indicating that in Costa Rica having health benefits through one's employment contract increases the likelihood of planning to migrate, probably because these migrants have good job prospects both at home and abroad. Although most migrants are young and do not contemplate retirement in their decision to migrate, these studies consider social insurance as an equivalent indicator of job formality.

Two studies on non-contributory health insurance, assess the effects of Mexico's Seguro Popular, a programme which provides access to public healthcare to the uninsured, including those who are unemployed, self-employed or who work outside the formal sector. Both studies found mixed outcomes. The programme did not affect international migration to the USA, probably because the transfers are not large enough to cover the healthcare needs of those affiliated and also due to the low quality of healthcare services (Lopez-Garcia and Orraca-Romano, 2019; Mahe, 2020). Indeed, the economic rewards of international migration may be more appealing than the risks of quitting an informal job. However, the programme also increased the return migration of undocumented migrants from the USA (Lopez-Garcia and Orraca-Romano, 2019), and increased internal migration (Mahe, 2020). Further research is needed to understand whether migrants considered their access to health insurance in their decisions to migrate or to return.

### 4.3.5 PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMMES AND EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE SCHEMES

The evidence on employment guarantee schemes has been growing in recent years. Overall, the effect of such programmes on migration is inconsistent, with 6 studies find a decrease in migration, 4 an increase, 5 find no impact and two mixed impact outcomes.

The NREGA in India, a programme that provides up to 100 days of paid work to rural households each year, has been the most researched in terms of its linkages to migration as it considers limiting rural-urban migration as an explicit aim (Deshingkar et al., 2010). The evidence suggests that the NREGA has not been as effective as expected in reducing overall distress migration (internal migration in response to a

shock or stress). This was explained by several reasons. First, the additional income gained through internal migration was higher than the salary provided through the NREGA schemes (Jacob, 2008; Sudarshan et al., 2010). Second, the provision of the *actual* number of days of work did not match the number *promised* by the programme (Deshingkar et al., 2010). Third, certain implementation challenges meant that people could not rely on NREGA and continued to favour migration as a source of income (Deshingkar et al., 2010). Short-term seasonal internal migration in India decreased in states that were able to offer a greater number of employment days and where real wages rose (Centre for Science and Environment, 2008; Imber and Papp, 2020; Papp, 2012). Even if some women earned less with the NREGA, it offered them a steady and reliable flow of income as opposed to the uncertainties of internal migration (Jacob, 2008). Another explanation could be that in certain communities or social groups, social norms restrict women's mobility and agency.

Evidence of other employment guarantee schemes have also contributed to the debate even though migration is not a stated objective. Some studies have found that such programmes are associated with a decrease in migration. The Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) in Ethiopia provides a safety net for vulnerable populations since it enables older persons to avoid migrating as a coping strategy during the lean season (Deshingkar et al., 2015). It also enables adolescent girls aged 12-18 years to avoid or delay migration related to marriage because they are required to provide unpaid care and domestic chores to their households, while adult females participate in public works (Hoddinott et al., 2020).

Other public works programmes appear to increase migration. The Social Safety Net Programme (SSNP) in Comoros, which provides an average of 60 days of work per year, increased migration to nearby wealthier Mayotte by reducing credit constraints related to the cost of migration, of those who expect higher returns from migration (Gazeaud et al., 2019). The Yigong-Daizhen programme in China, which does not guarantee a fixed number of days of employment, increased migration by reducing credit constraints of those neither too poor nor too rich to migrate (Chau et al., 2012).

Public works programmes which focus on youth as their main target participants, have found mixed migration outcomes on youth themselves or on other members of their household. In Sierra Leone, the Youth Employment Support Project, which offers a maximum of 75 days of work to youths aged 15-35 years, increased migration of other household members, particularly women (Rosas and Sabarwal, 2016). In Ghana, the Labour Intensive Public Work (LIPW) programme did not have an effect on seasonal youth migration because the natural resource assets created through the projects did not improve livelihoods during the dry season (Eshun and Dichaba, 2019; Namara et al., 2018). However, qualitative evidence suggests some level of reduction in seasonal migration as reported by project participants (Namara et al., 2018).

## 5. FACTORS THAT MEDIATE IMPACT

This section considers the factors that may mediate impacts and as such considers potential explanations for the patterns described in the previous section. It considers individual and household level factors, contextual factors and the role of programme design and implementation. Findings from relevant studies are now discussed in turn, as ever the evidence base is highly skewed towards studies from Latin America (especially Mexico), South Africa and India.

### 5.1 INDIVIDUAL AND HOUSEHOLD LEVEL FACTORS

The studies in the evidence considered several individual and household-level characteristics factor in on the link between social protection and migration: education and skill level, gender, ethnicity, age and household characteristics.

#### 5.1.1 EDUCATION AND SKILL-LEVEL

Amongst the six studies on education and skill level, two studies on social insurance programmes show that those with more education and who are able to contribute to the schemes are less likely to migrate (Greenwood et al., 1999; OECD, 2017a). Angelucci (2013) shows that unskilled migration increases as a result of the Oportunidades programme in Mexico because unskilled households face the greatest financial constraints in funding the cost of migration. Moreover, in the long-term individuals who have achieved greater years of education tend to migrate looking for better job opportunities than those with fewer years of education (Azua; 2009; Barham et al., 2018; Behrman et al., 2008; Gil-Garcia, 2019). De la Rocha (2009) found that at the end of eligibility to the Oportunidades programme, the most skilled individuals migrated to the USA and various urban destinations in Mexico, while the least skilled tended to stay in their locations of origin.

#### 5.1.2 GENDER

The gender of beneficiaries has a variety of outcomes amongst the 14 studies that consider this. The effect of the South African Old Age Pension programme, for example, suggests that, when the beneficiating pensioner was a woman, the likelihood of other members of the household migrating increased, especially that of other women (Ardington et al., 2009; Posel et al., 2006; Sienaert, 2008). That is because female beneficiaries usually shared their income with other members of the household or with absent members as well as looking after children when needed (Posel et al., 2006).

Gender was also found to be a significant factor influencing migration outcomes. In the case of CCTs, women tend to be tied to the home by the conditions of the programmes as mothers and caregivers, finding themselves unable to migrate



(Hughes, 2019; Ishikawa, 2014). Likewise, in Ethiopia, adolescent girls reduced their migration because they were required to assist with household chores, while their mothers were involved in public works programmes (Hoddinott et al., 2020). In India, the NREGA represented an important safety net that reduced the migration of poor and vulnerable women (Deshingkar et al., 2010), but generally did not change the propensity to migrate of men (Sudarshan et al., 2010).

However, other studies have found that women benefitting from cash transfers have a higher propensity to migrate than men, especially when they are high-skilled or the programmes have enabled them to increase their human capital (Hidrobo et al., 2020; Parker and Volg, 2018). In contrast, evidence on the Old Age Pension in China suggests that the pension increased migration of adult sons but not that of adult daughters. This is because the decision to migrate for adult daughters may still rely on their husbands' families, while adult sons (who follow the traditional norm to provide old-age support to parents) are able to migrate when the pensioner can afford health services rather than relying on their children's care when they were ill (Chen, 2016; Eggleston et al (2018).

### 5.1.3 ETHNICITY

The impact of social protection on migration is different according to ethnicity, although the evidence is patchy, considered in just seven studies. In the long-term, PRAF in Honduras reduced domestic migration of male indigenous youths (95 percent of whom in the sample were Lenca) to urban areas, while it increased international migration of non-indigenous (Molina et al., 2020). Similarly, Howell (2019), observed that the Minimum Living Standard in China decreased internal migration for most ethnic minority groups (including Hui, Tibetan, Uyghur, Miao, Zhuang, amongst others), but not for the Han majority possibly because poorer ethnic minorities face additional information and language barriers to migrate or due to cultural or religious preferences that make poorer ethnic minorities less likely to migrate even after credit constraints are reduced (see Box 1). In contrast, de la Rocha (2009) found that in the long-term, the Oportunidades programme increased internal migration in Mexico of indigenous youths (including Pima and Rarámuri in Chihuahua; Yaqui, Mayo and Guarijío in Sonora; Mixes, Mazatecos, Chinantecos, Mixtecos and Afro-Mestizos in Oaxaca; and Tzotzil, Tojolobal and Chol in Chiapas) who have less profitable job opportunities in their region of origin. In the case of non-indigenous youths (mestizos), although they also migrate internally or to the USA, they have less pressure to do so as a considerable number of young mestizos had access to employment in existing businesses in their areas of origin, either because family members or trusted acquaintances owned them (Ibid).

### 5.1.4 AGE

Seven studies consider age of the beneficiary, which is likely to influence migration. The elderly are more likely to stay at home and younger people are more likely to leave (see Deshingkar et al., 2015). Social protection programmes can reduce migration of direct young beneficiaries as intended by CCTs, which usually target children and youth at risk of dropping out of primary or secondary schooling. Studies have observed that CCTs reduce or delay migration in the short-term while children and youth attend school and receive the cash benefit, as was observed by the evidence of the Oportunidades programme in Mexico (Aguilar et al., 2019; Ishikawa, 2014). Similarly, in South Sudan, the Youth Start-up Business Grant Program reduced migration of young women, who expected the grant, and would have migrated in the absence of the programme (Muller et al., 2019). However, other evidence suggests that CCTs or UCTs have no effect on young beneficiaries because they migrate without the knowledge and permission of their guardians (Deshingkar et al., 2015).

### 5.1.5 HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS AND HOUSEHOLD INCOME AND WEALTH

In terms of household characteristics, there are 23 studies with diverse specifications and findings. Various studies show that migration of indirect beneficiaries (youths, young adults and head of households) belonging to beneficiary households tend to increase, while older beneficiaries tend to stay (e.g. Gil-Garcia, 2019; Soares, 2011; Winters et al., 2005). Household with large numbers of children tend not to migrate in the short-term, while these are completing their studies (Aguilar et al., 2019). This shows that households implement different strategies to diversify their income and to benefit from both social protection and migration simultaneously, without having to compromise the benefits of one over the other.

Linkages between migration and household income are not straightforward amongst those that receive social protection (13 studies on this). Some of the studies have found that poorer and low-asset households tend to migrate more than wealthier ones, as transfers loosen liquidity constraints (Cortina, 2014; Mesnard, 2009; Tiwari and Winters, 2019). However, Chau et al., (2012) observed an inverted U-shape relationship between average per capita income and migration, meaning that those not too poor neither too rich were the most likely to migrate.

## 5.2 CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

Contextual factors also mediate the impact of social protection programmes on migration outcomes. The studies mainly considered local labour markets, attractiveness of destinations, a culture of migration and exposure to other shocks.



### 5.2.1 LOCAL LABOUR MARKETS

Local labour markets and the availability of jobs can determine the need to migrate and mediate the impact of social protection – six studies considered this. For instance, health insurance has no impact on migration to the US from Mexico because migration driven by contextual factors including low wages, low-status jobs and poor working conditions (Lopez-Garcia and Orraca-Romano, 2019), similarly with regards to an unconditional cash transfer in Niger (Sibson, 2019). The Procampo programme in Mexico, on the other hand, reduced migration outflows to a *greater extent* at times when the Mexican economy was flourishing (Cortina, 2014). In deprived areas of origin, with poor employment prospects, the transfer can be used to finance migration, as documented in studies on South Africa (e.g. Sienaert, 2008) and women living in remote communities in Mali, with few economic opportunities nearby (Hirdrobo et al., 2020).

When social protection programmes also aim to bolster education levels – as some CCTs do – over time, as beneficiary populations become more educated, there may be greater incentives to migration, if local labour markets do not adapt. In a study that looked at the impact of participation in CCTs, RPS in Nicaragua found that ten years after first participating in the programme, permanent migration increased to secure higher paying jobs that beneficiaries can now access with their improved education levels (Barham et al., 2018). This is echoed in a number of studies on Mexico, with increases in migration for those who completed school (Behrman et al., 2008), those with increased marginal productivity as a result of Oportunidades (Azuara, 2009) and *female* children of former Oportunidades beneficiaries who benefited from the education and other components (Parker and Volg, 2018).

Migration can also be mediated by inequalities in access to the labour market or better paying jobs. Two ethnographic studies from Mexico show that it is the indigenous population, who face intersectional inequalities, who show an increase in migration (de la Pena, 2017), particularly after their education levels have increased (de la Rocha, 2009).

### 5.2.2. ATTRACTIVENESS OF DESTINATIONS

Likewise, the availability of jobs and wage differentials with major destinations at different points in time can explain why migration may continue or increase after social protection receipt. The majority of the 21 studies that considered this show that migration continues or increases for beneficiaries of social protection when destinations are more attractive, for instance, in terms of income that can be earned. Two studies show that US-Mexico income differences facilitated an increase in migration (Angelucci (2013) and that some beneficiaries may even drop out of school and Prospera programme, attracted by higher incomes (Gil-Garcia, 2019). When a destination becomes *less attractive*, for instance due to greater border enforcements

(Cortina, 2014; Latapi, 2000) or a slow-moving economy (Cortina, 2014) the impact of participation in a social protection programme may be felt more strongly.

### 5.2.3 CULTURE OF MIGRATION

More generally, previous exposure to migration and a culture of migration may explain why migration just continues regardless of social protection participation (e.g. de la Rocha, 2009; de la Pena, 2017; Palacios and Rubio, 2012), particularly if there is uncertainty about the future or the continuation of the programme (Curiel, 2000). Where migration is easier or lower in cost due to vicinity to the border, migration may be higher (Ishikawa, 2014). However, one study on Mexico actually finds larger *negative* impacts of social protection in villages with larger migration networks (Steklov et al., 2005). More generally, the impact social protection can have depends on the migration history within a village and the social and cultural norms around the purpose and meaning of migration. For instance, in Mexican villages with a strong history of educational migration, beneficiaries are likely to complete the programme but then migrate to study (Himmelstine, 2017).

### 5.2.4 OTHER SHOCKS

Finally, other shocks experienced by beneficiary households may explain migration outcomes (nine studies on this). In Nicaragua, during the coffee crisis when farmer's incomes suddenly dropped, the conditional cash transfer PRAF allowed beneficiary households to overcome credit constraints and migrate (Winters et al., 2005; see Box 1). During the 2008 financial crisis, Mexican households with long exposure to Oportunidades continued migrating as the programme provided a regular income (Gil-Garcia, 2016; Himmelstine, 2017). A study on Zambia showed that cash transfers can be used as a climate change adaptation strategy, enabling poorer households to migrate to urban centres in hot periods (Mueller et al., 2020). Another study on Mexico found that migration was linked to climatic shocks; however, larger transfers of Procampo or a more equal distribution of transfers led to a decrease in migration (Chort and de la Rupelle (2019). Finally, cash transfers can also facilitate migration in regions of conflict. In Colombia, in high-conflict communities, migration increases after cash transfer receipt as it loosens beneficiaries' credit constraints (Mesnard, 2009).

## 5.3 PROGRAMME DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

The way social protection programmes are designed and implemented may also influence the way such programmes affect migration outcomes (Adhikari and Gentilini, 2018; Clemens, 2022; OECD, 2017). Although social protection programmes are often not designed with mobility outcomes in mind, they may include explicit objectives, and target the reduction of migration by including mobility restrictions. Typically, however, it is other design features that inadvertently influence

the decision to migrate or not. This section reviews the evidence in the literature of the links between specific design features in social protection programme as well as the way they are implemented with migration outcomes.

### 5.3.1 PROGRAMME DESIGN

There are many ways the design of social protection programmes can theoretically influence migration outcomes. These include whether interventions are conditional or not, what those conditions are, who they target, whether they are nationally or locally implemented, their periodicity (or whether they are a one-time transfer only), the amount transferred, their portability and the type of benefit transferred or made available.

The research literature does not explicitly investigate much if any of these design features as possible reasons for the link between migration and social protection programmes. However, conclusions in the research literature often allude implicitly to such links, and the following paragraphs summarise the most important and widespread arguments.

#### CONDITIONAL PRESENCE IN LOCALITY OF PROGRAMME<sup>6</sup>

Several social protection programmes include specific conditions and criteria, in order for individuals and households to benefit from them. Conditional cash transfers, for instance, have become a common way for authorities to deliver some form of social protection or benefit, while ensuring that individuals and households fulfil obligations, such as school presence or a healthy nutritional in-take, that will maximise the returns to the social investment being made. The criteria typically involve the presence of the beneficiary or his/her child, such as health-related check-ups, vaccinations and school presence. Failure of fulfilling such conditions can lead to cancellation of the benefit.

While cash transfers may favour international migration by either relaxing liquidity, credit, and risk constraints, they may also reduce the propensity to migrate by increasing the opportunity cost of leaving – unless conditions are such that any adult may receive the transfer. Adding conditions may therefore increase the opportunity cost of leaving, and reduce the propensity of migration. Conditions can involve a placed-based policy, such as the requirement of registering for the benefit locally, providing evidence of a local residence, or providing regular in-person check-ins – and the research literature is not always clear on whether such conditions are in effect or not.

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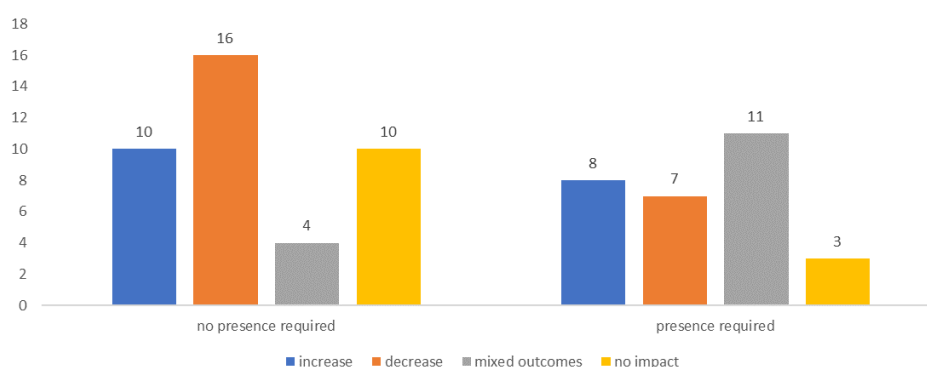
<sup>6</sup> See also Clemens (2022), who also considers design features of CCTs, in particular the conditional presence feature.

An earlier comparison between unconditional and conditional cash transfers suggests that making transfers conditional or unconditional does not necessarily lead to different outcomes on migration. There are several reasons for this indifference, that may hide the fact that conditionality may indeed influence migration.

- Someone else in the household that is not directly related to the benefit, migrated, as the benefits accrued through the social protection programme may be fungible;
- The conditions were not necessarily tied to physical presence;
- The migration outcome that was documented happened several years later, due to the benefits accrued by the programme (such as an increase in human capital).

Based on the literature reviewed, placed-based requirements in social protection systems do indeed seem to influence migration outcomes (Figure 11).

**FIG 11. MIGRATION OUTCOMES ACCORDING TO CONDITIONS OF LOCAL PRESENCE**



Source: authors' compilation

There are generally more papers based on programmes where such requirements do not (seem to) exist, perhaps because they are more common (40 programmes analysed with no such conditions, vs. 29 with such conditions). The breakdown between whether such conditions exist and are linked with migration outcomes is not very clear, however. When presence is *not* required, there are more studies suggesting that migration decreases or does not impact migration outcomes, whereas when local presence is required, mixed outcomes are more prevalent. This may be due to the fact that there is some shuffling within the household on who may or may not migrate when mobility restrictions are included – leading to some members leaving and others reducing their propensity to migrate (e.g., based on gender roles in the household, or age). A mixed outcome, for instance, could be an increase in a certain type of profile and a decrease in another (e.g., based on gender).

Breaking down the group of mixed outcome papers reveals that many of the papers linked with higher migration outcomes are also those investigating programmes with conditions of presence required, such as the Mexican Oportunidades programme. For example, Angelucci (2004), Angelucci (2013), Gil-Garcia (2016), Ishkawa (2014), Stecklov et al. (2005) and Tirado-Alcazar (2014) all allude to some form of increase or for some specific sub-group, suggesting that, relative to no presence required, programmes requiring presence are more likely to increase the propensity to migrate – in spite of theory suggesting otherwise.

Another conclusion from the literature is that if local presence required by an individual does not even limit the migration of that same individual. Several papers on the NREGA programme suggest that despite the requirement of remaining locally to work and benefit from the programme, many beneficiaries migrate as soon as they are no longer benefiting from the programme.

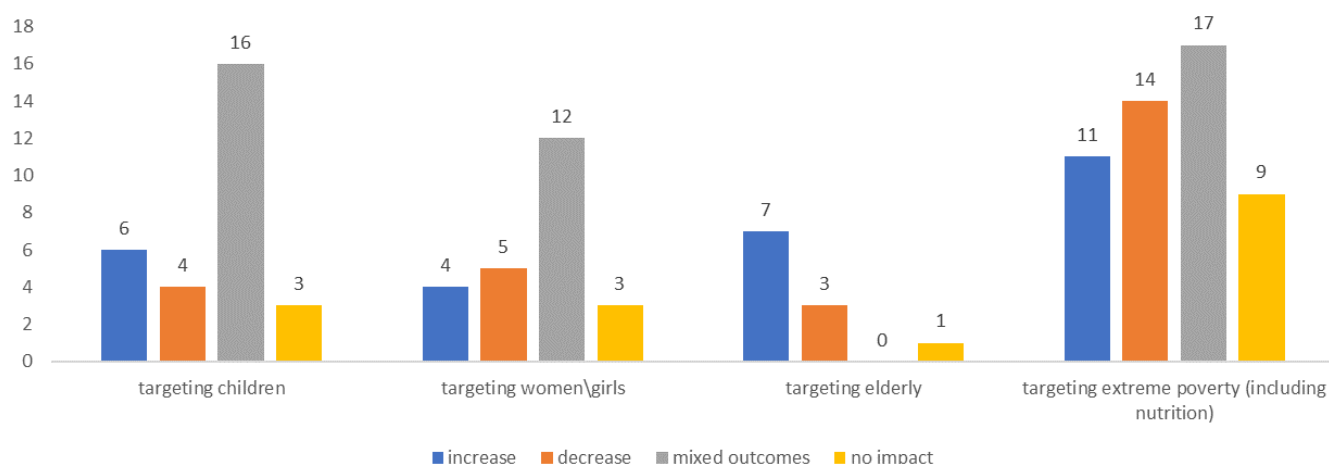
The link between conditional presence and migration may be related to whether the programme is targeted at the household or individual level, and more specifically, the targeted group of such programmes.

## TARGET GROUP

Beyond the conditionality of transfers and benefits, the target group, determined on the basis of geographical, household or individual characteristics, may influence the outcome. In fact, as an extension of the above discussion on conditional presence, pre-conditions such as a poverty, may help dictate whether social protection has an effect on migration or not. Cash transfer target groups, for instance, are typically and perhaps unsurprisingly poor, low-asset households e.g. Comoros' cash-for-work programme targets poor and lower educated households (Gazeaud et al, 2019).

As such, underlying circumstances of poverty and inequality of the target groups may drive migration as a prerequisite. Careful evaluation and econometric design is required to untangle whether the programme had an effect on migration – which is often not possible due to the lack of appropriate data to do so.

Summarising the literature and looking more specifically at target groups does not reveal any additional trend in the link between migration and social programmes. Whether programmes target children, youth, women\girls, the elderly or extreme poverty\nutrition, it does not seem to determine whether social protection programmes affect migration outcomes (Figure 12).

**FIG 12. MIGRATION OUTCOMES ACCORDING TO TARGET GROUP**

Source: authors' compilation

However, in a select few papers, inadvertent and randomised heterogeneity in income allows to summarise that the poorest, lowest asset households are typically more likely to have had an emigrant in the household – that is have a member leave - even amongst the group of poor households. The evaluation of the Bantuan Langsung Tunai programme in Indonesia (Tiwari and Winters, 2019) provides a good example, as it was implemented quickly and without adequate data on poverty to allow for poverty targeting. The programme allowed (inadvertently) for a wider targeting, and confirms that low-asset households are most likely to use the transfers to migrate. Another example is the effect of the cash transfers on migration from Comoros to Mayotte, where there was a significantly larger effect for households with low levels of savings or risk-aversion, suggesting that the cash transfers eased liquidity and risk constraints for poorer households (Gazeaud et al. 2019).

In some cases, target households are not necessarily only based on income, but also on their (potential) vulnerability to poverty. For instance, in Kenya, the conditional transfer programme evaluated by Soares (2011) is also based on the presence of orphans and vulnerable children in the household. The transfer increased the likelihood of adult migration from the household – providing some evidence that social protection programmes can lead to higher migration rates even when income and wealth are not explicitly targeted.

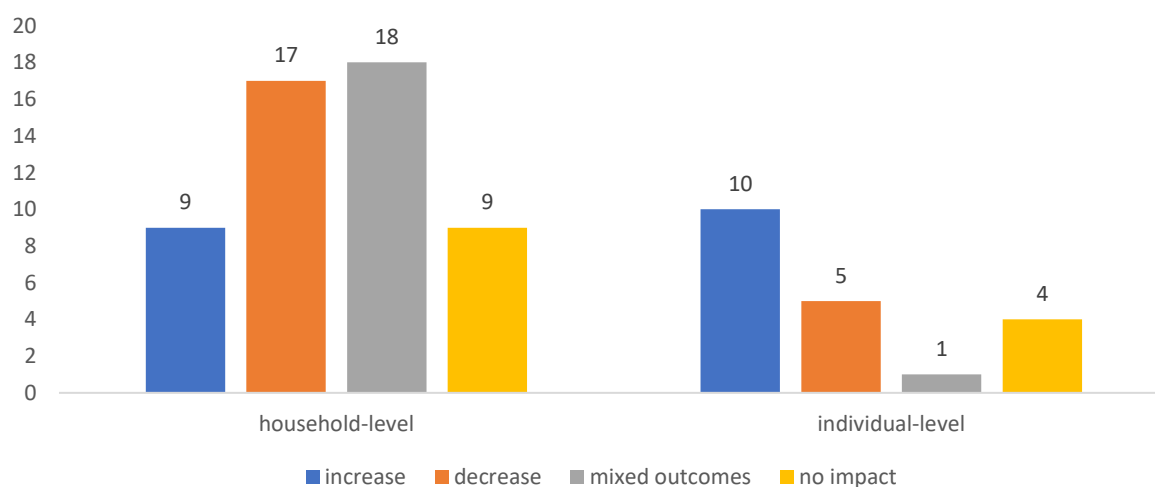
Two specific target groups are worth underlining, as they underpin a different scenario in the social protection-migration relationship: children and the elderly. In the case of many CCTs, children are the design targets. This is the case, for instance, for the Mexican Oportunidades programme, as well as the PRAF (Honduras) and RPS (Nicaragua) programmes. As children are unlikely to migrate independently, short-term or immediate effects on migration outcomes may be unlikely. The elderly, and specifically the many studies that exist on both the South African old-age pension and the Chinese New Rural Pension Scheme, provide



another example of a specifically targeted group. As funds are fungible, it is unsurprising to see that the additional household finances increase migration of other members, often the beneficiaries' adult children. All studies on the South African OAP conclude a general rise in migration of working age adults, and two of the three studies reviewed on the NRPS found that an adult child was more likely to migrate if their parent was benefiting from the pension.

The main design feature through which migration decisions are influenced may not necessarily be as specific as a group, but may lie on whether the programme is designed on household vs. individual characteristics. By looking more generally at whether the target of the benefit was provided based on household or individual characteristics, it becomes a little clearer that the propensity to migrate is higher in the context of an individual-level benefit, such as pension programmes, whereas the propensity to migrate in the context of a household level benefit is rather mixed (Figure 13).

**FIG 13. MIGRATION OUTCOMES ACCORDING TO TARGETING LEVEL**



Source: authors' compilation

## GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE

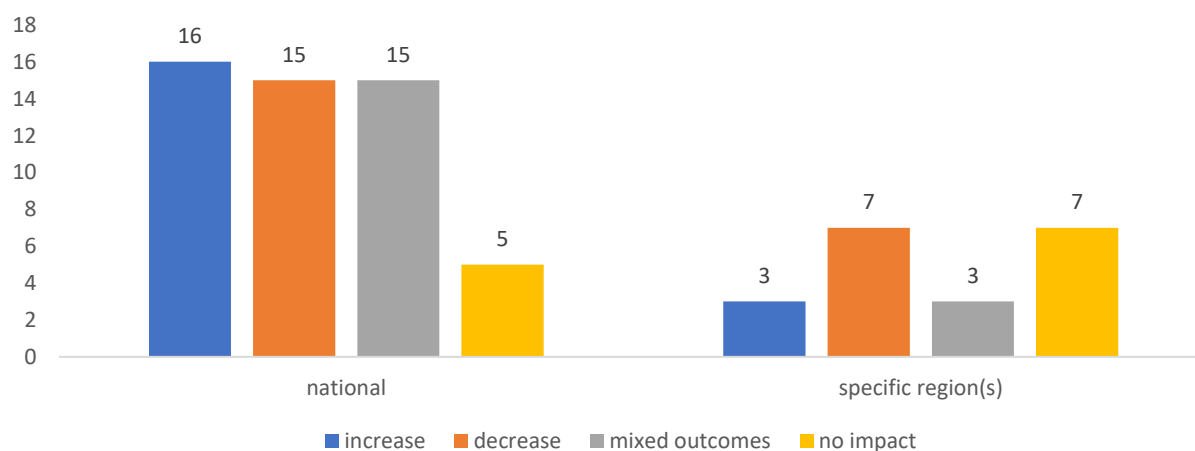
Not all programmes are nationally implemented, and in cases where they are, the rollout of the programme is typically done step-by-step, region-by-region, or targets only rural areas. For example, the Mexican Oportunidades programme was slowly expanded from 506 localities to national coverage from 1997 to 2000. Moreover, not all 506 localities were targeted as programme treatment areas, as 186 remained control localities (and then became treatment localities later in 1999), which could then serve for evaluation. Several researchers have exploited such variation in the

roll-out of Oportunidades in their identification and evaluation design, such as Aguilar et al. (2019). Other programmes where this was also the case include the Chinese NRPS, which began with 320 pilot counties in 2009, covered 838 counties by the end of 2010 and then virtually all of rural China by the end of 2012 (Eggleston et al, 2018).

Some programmes are geographically targeted as a matter of design, such as the Ghanaian Labour Intensive Public Work (LIPW) (Ghana), which targets the North of Ghana, and primarily agricultural areas affected by severe dry seasons (Eshun and Dichaba, 2019). On the other hand, programmes may not intend to be geographically inclined, but due to spatial inequalities in their design, they become so as with the Brazilian Bolsa Familia programme initially being implemented in the North-eastern regions, which are poorer than those in the South-East (De Oliveira and Chagas, 2018). The Ethiopian PSNP also does not operate everywhere in Ethiopia, as it is focused on administrative units (*woredas*) which historically have been drought-prone recipients of food aid (Hoddinott et al., 2020).

Whether programmes are nationally or only regionally implemented may therefore affect their link with migration outcomes<sup>7</sup> (see figure 14).

**FIG 14. MIGRATION OUTCOMES ACCORDING TO GEOGRAPHIC IMPLEMENTATION**



Source: authors' compilation

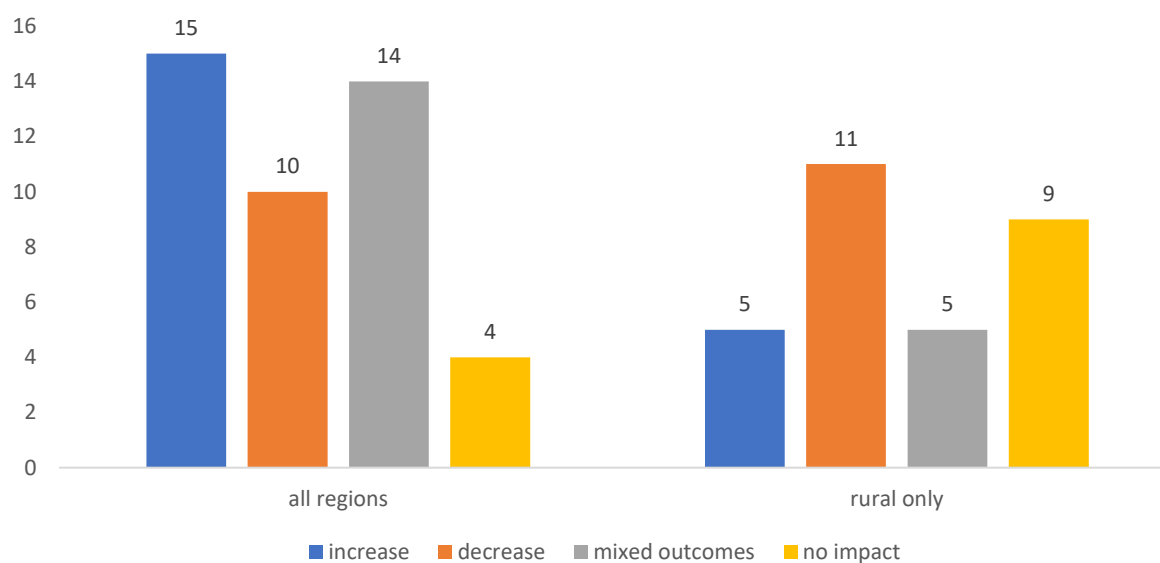
<sup>7</sup> In addition, partial implementation of programmes geographically could also spur internal migration, theoretically, as people move to benefit from the programme. In fact, the MSCTS programme in Malawi led to attracting migration to households that were benefiting from it (papers covering *in*-migration flows are not reviewed here). In the literature reviewed here, there is little to suggest such dynamics typically occur.



Reviewing the literature, there is more evidence of an impact (both increase and decrease) in contexts of national programmes rather than specific regional ones – including those targeting rural areas only. In fact, there is a disproportionate number of papers suggesting that there is no impact on migration in specifically targeted regional programmes. One likely explanation is that a household may still benefit from the programme in their new locality in national programmes, whereas this may not be the case if the programme is regionally targeted. In fact, across the literature reviewed, nationally implemented programmes seem to show little difference across their impact on increases and decreases in migration. When programmes are implemented regionally on the other hand, programmes seem to decrease migration.

Looking more closely at whether papers focused on programmes in rural versus all types of regions, including urban ones, a similar but even more marked difference emerges (see Figure 15). While programmes that were generally implemented in all types of regions in the country nationally saw more increases than decreases in migration, those implemented only in rural areas saw more decreases.

**FIG 15. MIGRATION OUTCOMES ACCORDING TO TYPE OF REGION**



Source: authors' compilation

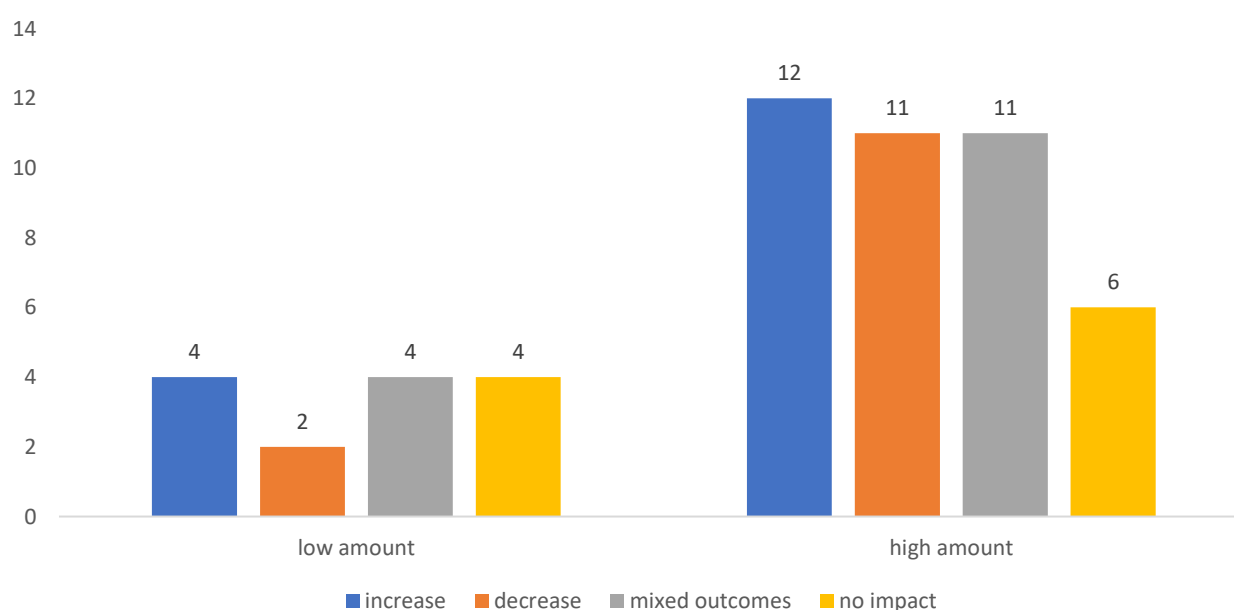
### AMOUNT TRANSFERRED, PERIODICITY, EXPECTATIONS AND TERM

The amount transferred through a programme and its periodicity and regularity can also play a role in the link it has with migration. One-time transfers may, for instance, provide enough capital to cover migration, and without a clear signal that more

transfers will come, there is little incentive for individuals and household members *not* to emigrate, especially if pre-existing conditions or migration aspirations were already present. On the other hand, periodical transfers, especially if conditioned on being physically present for the transfer, can lower the probability of migration – although it does not diminish the possibility of another member migrating. The amount transferred may be a determinant of either an increase or a decrease in the propensity to migrate, as it may not be enough to cover migration costs, or it may provide the household with enough funds to lower the need to find income streams from migration.

There is little explicit evidence that either the amount transferred or its periodicity are clear determinants of the link between social protection and migration, although several papers allude to the possibility. We first consider whether the amount is ‘low’ or ‘high’, as assessed by the authors of the studies. In terms of size of the amount transferred, the results do not suggest any clear link with migration outcomes (Figure 16).

**FIG 16. MIGRATION OUTCOMES ACCORDING TO AMOUNT TRANSFERRED**



Source: authors' compilation

There are several examples in the reviewed literature where transfers are argued to be too low to keep individuals or households in their home country or locality. The Comoran Social Safety Net Program, which offers USD 320 in cash for participation in public works projects, for an average of 60 days, with wage, did not reduce migration to the richer island of Mayotte. Similarly, Cortina (2014) finds that the transfers of about USD 75 offered by the Mexican Procampo agricultural cash

transfer programme was not enough to limit migration, although that finding is contested by Chort and De La Rupelle for some specific subgroups (they find that climate-induced migration decreased). In Mali also, the monthly Filets Sociaux cash transfers of 30k FCFA (USD 18) were not enough to stop women and men from migrating (Hidrobo et al. 2020). Finally, the transfers made in the Nicaraguan RPS, which were equivalent of 18% of pre-programme household expenditures) were also not enough to stop migration.

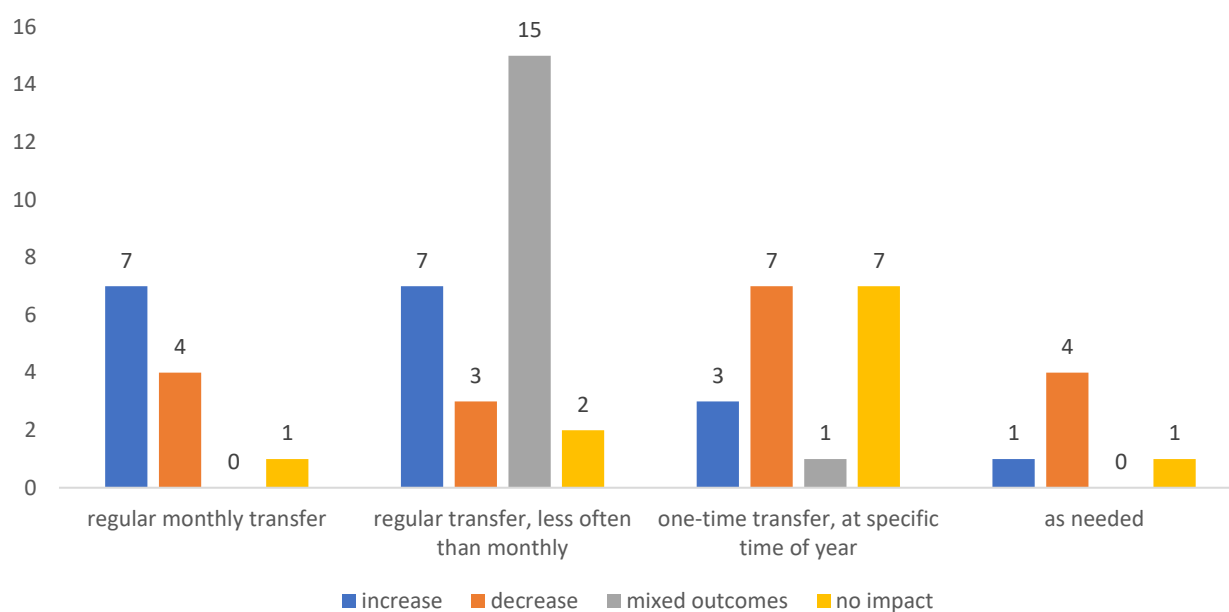
The link between the amount transferred and migration is argued to not be linear, however. Discussing the effects of Procampo, Cortina (2014) notes that the migration-social protection transfers link follows an inverted u-shape curve, which suggests that transfers may increase migration, but only up to certain level of cash transfer, after which individuals and households do not opt to migrate.

High transfers may not be enough, however. Most researchers agree that the universal, unconditional South African OAP is particularly generous<sup>8</sup>, yet its transfer to household is still linked with spurring internal migration within South Africa. This is also true of the Chinese NRPS, which although less generous than the South African OAP, is still linked with migration of adult children living in the benefiting household. The NRPS pays 25% of per capita income to those aged more than 60 (Eggleston et al., 2018).

Most of these transfers are regular (either monthly or bimonthly) and feature a mix of generous and smaller amounts. There is therefore no strongly supporting evidence about how the amount or regularity of such transfers play a role in the link with migration (Figure 17).

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<sup>8</sup> In 2012, the OAP transfer amount was of 1200 Rand per month (around USD130), which was about four times larger than the child support grant (Abel, 2013), and corresponding to about 175% of the median wage in South Africa (Woolard et al. 2011).

**FIG 17. MIGRATION OUTCOMES ACCORDING TO FREQUENCY OF TRANSFER**

Source: authors' compilation

Another area of potential research is on the expectations of the future of the programme. Knowledge about whether the programme will end and when may influence migration behaviour of households and individuals. In Nicaragua's RPS for instance, where migration increased, beneficiary households were only eligible to receive the program for a fixed period of three years, after which it was not possible to renew eligibility (Barham, et al. 2018). Another example of an unexpected end to a programme is that of cash transfer programme in South Sudan, where migration decreased (Muller et al., 2019).

Indeed, frequency and the expectation of a continued transfer or benefit may play a central role in the decision to migrate. If a transfer is made often, there may be administrative reasons to stay in the home country or region and avoid losing rights to the transfer. More transfers that are frequent may also provide the financial incentive to stay home. On the other side, increasing the frequency of transfers also increases the administrative costs for the government or organisation implementing the programme. The regularity of a transfer also increases its predictability, on which beneficiaries can plan around - for instance, by ensuring that they are not away from home when the transfers are administered.

The body of research suggests evidence that more regular transfers lead to higher, rather than lower, migration outcomes, particularly when such transfers are monthly, such as is the case with the Brazilian Bolsa Familia programme, The Philippine Pantawid Familyang programme or either of the Chinese or South African pension

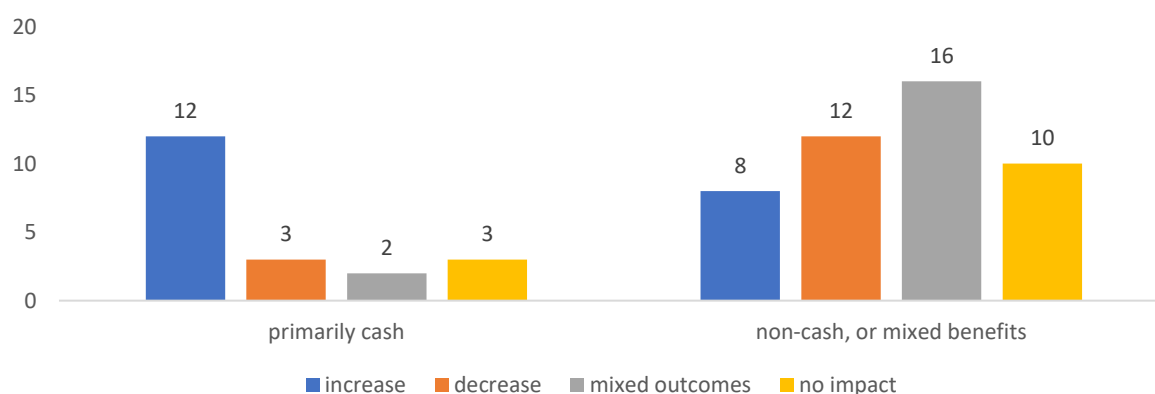
programmes. When transfers are less frequent than monthly, research tends to find more mixed outcomes, which is the case with most CCTs. When transfers are either one-time affairs (such as employment programmes), or on a need basis (such as with insurance), decreases or no impact are more common.

## TYPE OF BENEFIT

An important element in the design of a social protection programme is the identification of the benefit itself: cash, in-kind, or mixed with other types of benefits such as training. Cash transfers, particularly if they are not conditional, do not necessarily physically tie the benefactor to the place of origin, and therefore may be more likely to lead to migration, if the prevailing conditions to do so exist. On the other hand, in-kind transfers, trainings and services must be received in-person, and therefore may reduce migration (at least while benefiting from the programme), particularly if the person benefiting from the intervention was the most likely in the household to migrate. This mechanism may be even stronger when in-kind transfers are for productive assets or goods intended for local use, such as seeds and fertiliser.

Broadly analysing the literature suggests that purely cash-based programmes are much more likely to be associated with increases in migration (20 studies), whereas those that are mixed benefits (including food, medicine and especially training), 46 studies, are more likely to lead to decreases in migration or mixed outcomes (Figure 18).

**FIG 18. MIGRATION OUTCOMES ACCORDING TO TYPE OF BENEFIT**



Source: authors' compilation

The programmes reviewed in this paper that offer a combination of cash and in-kind transfers, often show a decrease, rather than an increase in migration. This is the case, for example of Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP), where benefits are provided in the form of both food and cash (Hoddinott, et al., 2020). In

the Mexican Oportunidades programme, benefits include a mix of education, nutrition, health and direct cash transfers – and in fact, most migration outcomes are related to the generation of children that benefited from these a generation prior (for example, Aguilar, 2019).

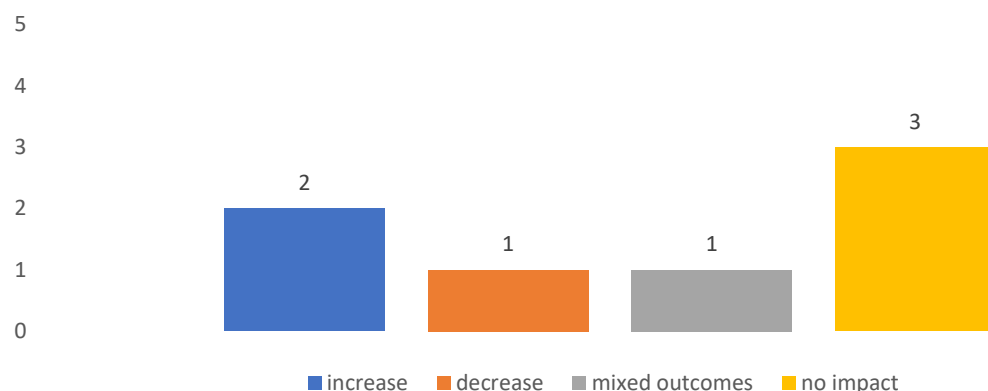
Another type of benefit is insurance, such as the Mexican Fonden programme, evaluated by Chort and De La Rupelle (2019). The programme offers insurance to agricultural households in case of natural disasters, which must be officially declared. On average, 30 natural disasters per year are declared under this programme, and Chort and De La Rupelle (2019) demonstrate that it is effective in reducing undocumented migration.

A final important type of benefit received in some social protection interventions is training. While some programmes are explicitly training programmes, such as in agriculture, many of the other programmes reviewed, including CCTs, have also integrated training programmes. The Malian Filets Sociaux CCT, for instance, includes two training activities per month on the importance of managing social protection, education, maternal and child health, although they are voluntary. In the Malian case, the programme is linked with lower internal migration for agricultural women (Hidrobo et al, 2020). The lack of training was argued as the major reason for the continuation of the internal migration of youth in Ghana's LIPW. The cash-for-work programme was tied to the development of assets in the localities of origin, which were never used because youth were never properly trained on how to use them, a major determinant of the migration outcome (Eshun and Dichaba, 2019).

### 5.3.2 PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

On **implementation**, several elements can influence the migration outcome of the programme, but these issues are not covered in most of the studies. What seems to generally matter the most is whether implementers had adequate access to data to identify the target group; whether they have the capacity to implement sometimes complex initiatives; whether implementers are able to access all parts of the country and whether the programme is anticipated or not – in other words, how exogenous the positive income shock is to the recipient household, including its eventual completion. In addition to these factors, the general macroeconomic context in which such programmes are implemented may play a role, although this is generally out of the control of the designers (see also section 5.2).

One aspect covered in the literature in more detail is the capacity to implement, though the papers cannot draw any conclusions on the causal links between implementation and migration outcomes. There are seven studies on implementation issues, summarised in Figure 19, with no clear correlation with a particular migration outcome.

**FIG 19. MIGRATION OUTCOMES AND IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES**

Source: authors' compilation

In the Kenyan Cash Transfers for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (CT-OVC) programme, transfers were conditioned upon education and health requirements. While households that did not comply with the conditions had their transfer reduced from their payment, this was not fully implemented, and therefore understanding the real role of such conditions in explaining an overall increase in migration is difficult to ascertain (Soares, 2011). In Indonesia, arbitrary targeting is highlighted as a major concern in the Bantuan Langsung Tunai programme (Tiwari and Winters, 2019). General problems related to conception affecting the outcome were highlighted in the Labour-Intensive Public Work programme in Ghana, as low water, land and financial constraints (including barriers faced by women) tended to diminish the desired impact of the initiative (Eshun and Dichaba, 2019), potentially contributing to an increase or no impact of migration.

On capacity, the ability to follow-through and enforce certain requirements may simply be too costly for the implementing country and organisation. For instance, in the Nicaraguan Red de Proteccion Social programme, enforcing the requirements of child health checks, and the presence of the primary caretaker, may be too challenging to effectively and regularly control, which may explain why the authors find mixed outcomes on migration (Winters et al, 2005). A similar point is made by Lopez-Garcia and Orraca-Romano (2019) on the implementation of health insurance in Mexico and how poor implementation means impact on migration is limited. Issues related to the implementation of the NREGA programme in India include its short duration, inherent corruption, the provision of the number of days of work did not match the number promised by the programme, and delays in payments, which ultimately lead to households not relying on the programme as a steady and consistent social protection mechanism. Thus, beneficiaries continued to favour migration (Deshingkar, 2010). In the case of the PSNP, the evidence shows that when implemented correctly, it provided a safety net for vulnerable populations since it enabled elderly people to stay, instead of migrating as a coping strategy during the



lean season (Deshingkar et al., 2015). This evidence suggests that the efficient implementation of public work programmes was a key factor that led to a reduction in migration.

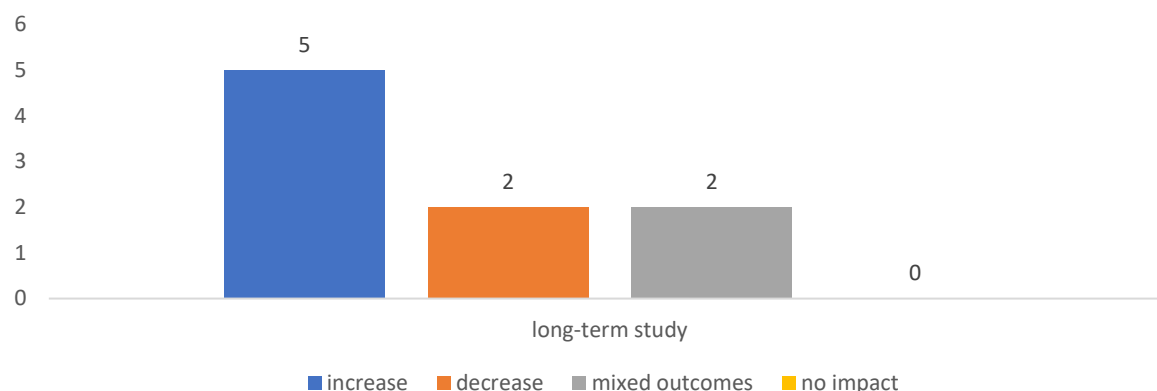
Unexpected events may also deeply affect the outcome. The Youth Business Start-up Grant Program in South Sudan was suddenly terminated in 2016 before its intended termination date, and before most of the intended beneficiaries had accessed the grant, due to violence in the country (Muller et al., 2019). Nevertheless, these participants were less likely to migrate despite the breakout in conflict, perhaps in anticipation of receipt of the transfer, showing the potential detrimental outcomes of weak implementation (ibid).

## 5.4 METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Two additional considerations are worthy of mention in the design of social protection interventions and their link with migration: the timeline considered in the research and the time it may take for a programme to have its full effects.

The timeline observed by the researcher, and the expectations of the programme in the longer run play a significant role (see box 3, methodological and data choices). As mentioned above in the context of programmes targeting children, while short-term or immediate effects on migration outcomes may be less likely, it is plausible that the main long-run increase in migration outcomes are found among those who were the primary target of the policy – particularly if such programmes increased their human capital and therefore employability, in the form of health, nutrition, and schooling (Aguilar, 2019). For example, Himmelstine (2017) argues that the Oportunidades programme led to a decrease in migration in the short-term, but an increase of migration in the long-term. This is consistent with the findings of several studies suggesting that the migration effects of the Oportunidades programme were particularly felt in the longer term, that is, on adults who were children at the time they benefited from the programme. It is also an area where the outcomes suggested by researchers are less ambiguous. Of the nine studies that look at the longer-term migration effects of children benefiting from Oportunidades, RPS and PRAF-II, five of them suggest an increase – while none suggest no impact (Figure 20). Moreover, of the two studies that discuss mixed outcomes (decrease and increase), one of them finds that migration shifted from domestic (decreased) to international (increased) destinations (Molina et al., 2020), while the other finds an increase in Nicaragua (and a decrease in Honduras) (Winters et al., 2005). Even amongst the two papers suggesting a decrease, one of them (namely Behrman et al., 2008) argues that despite the findings, in situations where returns to education are higher elsewhere in Mexico, Oportunidades is also associated with higher migration propensity. Therefore, the only study with an unambiguous decrease conclusion in the long-term is Rodriguez-Oreggia and Freije (2012).



**FIG 20. MIGRATION OUTCOMES IN THE LONG-TERM**

Source: authors' compilation

Under a similar light, the specific migration channel targeted by the social protection programme may be inadvertent as well. One example is the aforementioned channel whereby benefiting children have different migratory behaviour later on as adults. Similarly, children who do not meet the eligibility requirements of certain programmes, may live with younger children who do, and therefore benefit from the programme at a household level – thus still influencing their migration outcomes (Barham et al., 2018). Another example is the channel through which social protection may indirectly influence migration outcomes through secondary channels, by affecting human capital (skills, education) or health (nutrition). For example, a programme increasing human capital may make a person more mobile, and thereby increase the propensity of migration. In Ethiopia, marriage has been shown to be an important channel, as the national productive safety net program (PSNP) has led to delays in households marrying-out adolescent females, and therefore decreases in marriage migration for females (Hoddinott et al., 2020).

## 6. CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This review retrieved 76 studies that explicitly examine the impact of social protection on migration decision-making, migration outcomes or aggregate migration flows. A detailed summary of key findings is included in the executive summary at the front of the paper.

### 6.1 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The review on how social protection programmes can influence migration outcomes suggests number of policy implications. This review suggests six implications for policy.

**BROADEN THE TERMS OF THE POLITICAL DISCOURSE**

The main conclusion of this paper is that social protection programmes are the concern of a broader set of decision makers and influencers than those managing social protection and social programmes. In addition, migration challenges and issues are a broader concern than one reduced to migration policy-related decision makers. There is clear need to broaden the terms and dialogues on both social protection and migration policy than what is currently the case. The interlinkages are complex and reach a wide range of areas, including agriculture, finance, labour markets, culture, policing, environment, territorial concerns, education and skills. As social protection benefits may be fungible, the beneficiary may not necessarily be the person whose migration outcome is affected. Similarly, social protection influence on migration may vary over time, and by type of programme. Broadening the terms of the discourse also implies ensuring that capacity of administrators and designers of such programmes is strengthened to account for such interlinkages.

**INVOLVE MORE ACTORS AT EARLIER STAGES OF DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION**

The complex ways that migration and social protection programmes interlink reflects the need for more relevant actors involved, and earlier. That is, members of civil society, the private sector, departments and ministries across the government (horizontal integration) and from local to national (vertical integration) as well as experts on the question should be in discussions. For instance, if the programme in discussion is a public-private pension programme, related private sector and local administrative actors should be involved in regions where it is being implemented, along with related governmental actors. This reflects the idea of a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to migration governance called for in the Global Compact on Migration (GCM).

**IDENTIFY WHETHER MIGRATION OBJECTIVES ARE IMPORTANT, OR NOT, TO SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMMES**

The primary reason for social protection programmes is the protection of the social and economic livelihoods of people. However, policymakers may explicitly or implicitly build-in migration outcomes within the objectives of the programme (either more or less – e.g. retaining skilled workers). Policymakers must decide whether migration outcomes are important to the objectives of the programmes or not, and act accordingly – given the inadvertent effects such programmes may have on migration. The influence of social protection on migration varies widely, and if migration objectives are included in social protection programming, these must be accounted for. Programmes must be designed carefully to ensure that unintended and possibly even incoherent outcomes are avoided.

## ACCOUNT FOR GROUP SPECIFICITIES WHEN DESIGNING SOCIAL PROTECTION

The effects and the variety of outcomes vary by specific, often vulnerable, groups, such as youth, women, people with disabilities, elderly people, rural and lower educated/illiterate people. Each group represents specific needs as the link they may have with both social protection and migration is not uniform across subgroups.

## ENSURE THAT SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMMES EQUIP INDIVIDUALS AND HOUSEHOLDS WITH SKILLS OR REDUCE RISK

Purely cash-based programmes tend to increase migration, compared to non-monetary transfers, services or insurance. Communicating and ensuring that targeted individuals and households have the capacity and are enabled to use the benefits is also important, as it transcends the challenges of their interlinkage with migration. For instance, this review pointed out that migration may be limited due to the inflexibility of social protection benefits and the difficulties in transferring rights to certain programmes in other parts of the country.

## MONITOR AND EVALUATE SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMMES FOR THEIR IMPACT ON MIGRATION

Given that there are many inadvertent effects, some of which we may not be able to always account for, as well as the fact that migration may or may not be an explicit objective of the programme, monitoring and evaluation regarding migration outcomes should be a regular component of social protection programmes. This is all the more important given that the interlinkages may vary over time, household members, type of programme and capacity to implement such programmes. With a clear monitoring and evaluation strategy, actors that may not have been involved in the design earlier on can be brought in, and programmes can be adjusted to tie in closer to its objectives.

## 6.2 SUGGESTED AREAS OF FUTURE RESEARCH

This review identified a number of critical gaps in the literature. First, consideration of the context where social protection programmes are implemented and how it mediates social protection impacts needs further research. Very few studies provided an analysis of the locations of fieldwork areas or other contextual factors that could have led to migration when participants and their households benefit from social protection. Most studies mentioned the persistence of poverty or the role of environmental shocks and deficient agricultural conditions, but very few explore the role of major economic shocks, enforcement of migration laws, social structures, and of the cultural or agro-economic processes that could influence migration decisions of individuals and households benefitting from social protection. Furthermore, context

changes over time and the factors that drive contextual changes and their outcomes on social protection is overlooked.

Second, the types of migration caused by the social protection programme such as distress, labour, educational, marriage, amongst others, and what is the particular role of social protection on these decisions is unclear. Very few studies offer details on the kinds of migration that social protection produces beyond migration being internal, international, seasonal, return, etc. This is important because the evidence suggests that social protection has the potential to change migration in desired ways or even to reduce it. For example, in Malawi the migration of adolescent girls and boys may have shifted from forced migration for marriage and labour to migration for education (Deshingkar et al., 2015).

Third, the length of exposure either to the programme or to any tradition of migration (e.g. the social networks that may shape some destination preferences over others) is an additional gap. For example, the majority of studies do not differentiate whether households have been beneficiaries for a short, medium or long period of time. Indeed, length of exposure to the programme or to different migration traditions can interact with other factors such as covariate (e.g. climate change effects coupled with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic) and idiosyncratic (e.g. illness of a family members) shocks.

Fourth, the migration decision-making process of social protection beneficiaries or that of other members of their household needs further research. Most studies do not consider how the decision-making process works and overlook important factors that influence the decision-making process of those who benefit from social protection (directly and indirectly) and who migrate. This includes the direct benefits of the programme that led them or not to migrate; the aspirations that they may have shape as beneficiaries of the social protection programme; the presence of social networks in the migration process; the kinds of migration that some individuals or locations have undertaken even before the implementation of a social protection programme; or other tangible or intangible factors (gender norms, intersectional inequalities, availability of job opportunities) that have reduced the need of beneficiaries to migrate or to prevent them from doing so. The specific role of social protection or other forms of government support in the migration decision-making process also deserves more attention, as some household members may decide to stay while others migrate, or households may modify their livelihood strategies. Overall, other factors that might influence the decision to stay or to migrate for beneficiaries and other household members need further analysis.

All these gaps support the need for more contextualised research that underpins the precise role that social protection may have played in the decision-making process of individuals including in contexts where migration has been a previous livelihood strategy and where the migration of some members of a household may be preferred

over other strategies. MIDEQ will aim to address these gaps through its quantitative and qualitative research in six South-South migration corridors.

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## ANNEX 1 SEARCH PROTOCOL

### Inclusion criteria

#### *Screening:*

Inclusion criteria help in deciding whether a study that has been found is relevant. The following inclusion criteria will be applied during the screening process (all criteria need to be satisfied for the study to be included). They will be applied to titles, then abstracts, then full text. All studies that are included on the basis of the first stage screening process, will be included in study.

1. **Date:** No restriction
2. **Language:** The review is restricted to English, Spanish and French studies.
3. **Population:** Broadly migrants and their households living in migration origin countries/ migrant origin areas, in particular those covered by social protection schemes
4. **Geographical locations:** Global including migrants from low-income countries (LICs) or middle-income countries (MICs)
5. **Interventions:** Publicly mandated social protection
6. **Study design:** The study should be a solid empirical study (i.e. based on data and or fieldwork). It can be qualitative or quantitative. [Not theoretical; no literature review; nit descriptive]
7. **Outcome:** This can either be reduced/increased migration outflows or different types of migration flows (internal, intra-regional, return, etc). Type of migration can include but not limited to:
  - Distress - due to sudden shock (e.g. health)
  - Poverty - constant stresses
  - Employment – better employment possibilities
  - Education – of self or children
  - Political
  - Environmental

### List of searches:

- Google (first five pages)
- Google Scholar (first five pages)
- Databases: EBSCO, Web of Knowledge, SCOPUS

#### **4. Snowball technique**

Experts will be contacted and asked for relevant studies on the research question. We will also look at their websites for relevant publications. Studies shared by experts will be assessed against screening criteria. We will also check the reference lists of the studies obtained for any further studies that fit the inclusion criteria.

#### **5. Hand-searching**

The following websites/ search engines should be consulted, if possible using the same search strings as for the academic databases. Any studies found on these websites will be assessed against the same screening criteria



## Websites / search engines:

- World Bank
- The Migration Observatory (University of Oxford)
- IOM
- IOM Global Migration Data Analysis Centre
- IZA <https://www.iza.org/content/publications>
- Econpapers  
<https://econpapers.repec.org/scripts/search.pf?ft=%22future+of+work%22>
- Ideas <https://ideas.repec.org/cgi-bin/htsearch?form=extended&wm=wr&dt=range&ul=&q=%22future+of+work%22&cmd=Search%21&wf=4BFF&s=R&db=&de=>
- Migration Policy Centre (EUI)
- COMPAS (Oxford)
- CReAM
- Migration Policy Institute
- Cross Migration Database (EU)
- CGD
- Hal <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/>

## Journals:

- Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies
- Journal of Migration and Development
- Comparative Migration Studies
- International Migration Review
- International Migration
- Population, Space and Place
- Development and Change



## ANNEX 2 STUDIES ON THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL PROTECTION ON THE PROPENSITY TO MIGRATE AND AGGREGATE MIGRATION FLOWS

| Author                         | Country             | Name of social protection programme                                       | Type of programme                     | Impact on propensity to migrate/aggregate migration flows   |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| Barham et al. (2018)           | Nicaragua           | Red de Protección Social (RPS)  | Conditional Cash Transfer             | Increase  |
| Molina et al. (2020)           | Honduras            | Programa de Asignación Familiar (PRAF-II)                                 | Conditional Cash Transfer             | Mixed outcomes - decrease domestic migration (indigenous youths), increase international migration (non-indigenous) |
| Winters et al. (2005)          | Honduras; Nicaragua | Programa de Asignación Familiar (PRAF-II); Red de Protección Social (RPS) | Conditional Cash Transfer             | Mixed outcomes - no impact (Honduras), increase (Nicaragua)   |
| Chort and de la Rupelle (2019) | Mexico              | Procampo  | Conditional Cash Transfer for Farmers | Decrease  |
| Cortina (2014)                 | Mexico              | Procampo  | Conditional Cash Transfer for Farmers | Increase (but decrease over time)   |
| Cuecuecha and Scott (2009)     | Mexico              | Procampo  | Conditional Cash Transfer for Farmers | Decrease  |

|                                 |        |                                      |                                       |   |
|---------------------------------|--------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Gonzalez-Konig and Wodon (2005) | Mexico | Procampo                             | Conditional Cash Transfer for farmers | Decrease  |
| Aguilar et al. (2019)           | Mexico | Progresas / Oportunidades / Propsera | Conditional Cash Transfer             | Mixed outcomes - decrease in the short-term (individuals aged 11-16 in 1997), increase in the long-term |
| Angelucci (2004)                | Mexico | Progresas / Oportunidades / Propsera | Conditional Cash Transfer             | Mixed outcomes – increase (international), no impact – (internal)                                       |
| Angelucci (2013)                | Mexico | Progresas / Oportunidades / Propsera | Conditional Cash Transfer             | Mixed outcomes – increase (international), no impact – (internal)                                       |
| Azuara (2009)                   | Mexico | Progresas / Oportunidades / Propsera | Conditional Cash Transfer             | Increase  |
| Behrman et al. (2008)           | Mexico | Progresas / Oportunidades / Propsera | Conditional Cash Transfer             | Decrease  |
| Curiel (2000)                   | Mexico | Progresas / Oportunidades / Propsera | Conditional Cash Transfer             | Mixed outcomes – decrease (students), mixed outcomes (heads of household)                               |
| De la Peña (2017)               | Mexico | Progresas / Oportunidades / Propsera | Conditional Cash Transfer             | No impact   |
| De la Rocha (2009)              | Mexico | Progresas / Oportunidades / Propsera | Conditional Cash Transfer             | Increase  |

|                           |        |                                     |                           |  |
|---------------------------|--------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| Gil-Garcia (2016)         | Mexico | Progresa / Oportunidades / Propsera | Conditional Cash Transfer | Mixed outcomes - international migration continues (parents), decrease (direct former beneficiaries) |
| Gil-Garcia (2019)         | Mexico | Progresa / Oportunidades / Propsera | Conditional Cash Transfer | Mixed outcomes - no impact (migration continues), decrease (short-term)                              |
| Himmelstine (2017)        | Mexico | Progresa / Oportunidades / Propsera | Conditional Cash Transfer | Mixed outcomes- decrease (in the short-term), increase in the long-term                              |
| Hughes (2019)             | Mexico | Progresa / Oportunidades / Propsera | Conditional Cash Transfer | Decrease (females)   |
| Ishikawa (2014)           | Mexico | Progresa / Oportunidades / Propsera | Conditional Cash Transfer | Mixed outcomes - decrease (children and mothers), increase (other members of the household)          |
| Latapi (2000)             | Mexico | Progresa / Oportunidades / Propsera | Conditional Cash Transfer | Mixed outcomes – mixed outcomes (indirect beneficiaries), increase (return migration)                |
| Palacios and Rubio (2012) | Mexico | Progresa / Oportunidades / Propsera | Conditional Cash Transfer | No impact  |
| Parker and Volg (2018)    | Mexico | Progresa / Oportunidades / Propsera | Conditional Cash Transfer | Increase (female)  |

|   |                 |                                     |                           |   |
|---|-----------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| Rodriguez-Oreggia and Freije, S. (2012) | Mexico          | Progreso / Oportunidades / Propsera | Conditional Cash Transfer | Decrease  |
| Rubalcava and Teruel (2006)             | Mexico          | Progreso / Oportunidades / Propsera | Conditional Cash Transfer | Increase  |
| Stecklov et al. (2005)                  | Mexico          | Progreso / Oportunidades / Propsera | Conditional Cash Transfer | Mixed outcomes - decrease (international), no impact (internal)                               |
| Tirado-Alcazar (2014)                   | Mexico          | Progreso / Oportunidades / Propsera | Conditional Cash Transfer | Mixed outcomes - no impact (international), increase (domestic)                               |
| Mesnard (2009)                          | Colombia        | Familias en Acción                  | Conditional Cash Transfer | Mixed outcomes - decrease (when violence is not high), increase (when violence is high)       |
| Da Mota Silveira Neto (2008)            | Brazil          | Bolsa Familia                       | Conditional Cash Transfer | Decrease  |
| De Oliveira and Chagas (2018)           | Brazil          | Bolsa Familia                       | Conditional Cash Transfer | Decrease  |
| Fontes et al. (2019)                    | Brazil          | Bolsa Familia                       | Conditional Cash Transfer | Mixed outcomes – increase (return) and no impact (migrants who left before BF implementation) |
| OECD (2017b)                            | The Philippines | Pantawid ng Pamilyang Pilipino      | Conditional Cash Transfer | Increase  |

|                          |                       | Program or<br>4Ps   |                                |   |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|---|--------------------------------|---|
| OECD<br>(2017d)          | Haiti                 | Ti Manman<br>Cheri (TMC)  | Conditional<br>Cash Transfer   | Increase  |
| OECD (e)                 | Dominican<br>Republic | Solidaridad   | Conditional<br>Cash Transfer   | No impact   |
| Hidrobo et al<br>(2020)  | Mali                  | Filets Sociaux<br>(Jigisémèjiri)  | Unconditional<br>Cash Transfer | Mixed outcomes – increase<br>(male, salaried women and<br>women living in remote<br>communities), decrease<br>(women working in<br>agriculture) |
| Howell<br>(2019)         | China                 | Minimum<br>Living<br>Standard<br>Assistance<br>(MLSA)<br>programme -<br>Dibao | Unconditional<br>Cash Transfer | Decrease  |
| Mueller et al.<br>(2020) | Zambia                | Child Grant<br>Program<br>(CGP)   | Unconditional<br>Cash Transfer | Mixed outcomes - increase<br>except for wealthier<br>households whose migration<br>decreased during extreme<br>heat                             |
| Muller et al.<br>(2019)  | South Sudan           | Youth<br>Business<br>Start-Up Grant<br>Program                                | Unconditional<br>Cash Transfer | Decrease (females)  |
| Sibson<br>(2019)         | Niger                 | REFANI-N<br>trial   | Unconditional<br>Cash Transfer | No impact   |

|                           |              |   |  |          |
|---------------------------|--------------|---|--|----------|
| Soares (2011)             | Kenya        | Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (Kenya) | Unconditional Cash Transfer                | Increase |
| Tiwari and Winters (2019) | Indonesia    | Bantuan Langsung Tunai                                    | Unconditional Cash Transfer                | Increase |
| Chen (2016)               | China        | New Rural Pension Scheme (NRPS)                           | Non-contributory (aged 60 or over)         | Increase |
| Eggleston et al (2018)    | China        | New Rural Pension Scheme (NRPS)                           | Non-contributory pension (aged 60 or over) | Increase |
| Li et al. (2018)          | China        | New Rural Pension Scheme (NRPS)                           | Non-contributory pension (aged 60 or over) | Decrease |
| Ardington et al (2009)    | South Africa | Old-age grant   | Non-contributory pension                   | Increase |
| Inder and Maitra (2004)   | South Africa | Old-age grant   | Non-contributory pension                   | Increase |
| Posel et al. (2006)       | South Africa | Old-age grant   | Non-contributory pension                   | Increase |

|                               |                        |                             |   |           |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|---|-----------|
| Sienaert (2007)               | South Africa           | Old-age grant               | Non-contributory pension  | Increase  |
| Sienaert (2008)               | South Africa           | Old-age grant               | Non-contributory pension  | Increase  |
| Walsham (2020)                | Uganda                 | Senior Citizens Grant (SCG) | Non-contributory pension  | No impact |
| Hagen-Zanker et al (2009)     | Albania                | Social insurance            | Social assistance; Old Age allowance; Disability pay; Unemployment benefit; Maternity allowance | Decrease  |
| Greenwood et al. (1999)       | 60 countries of origin | Social insurance            | Old-age pensions; sickness and maternity benefits; unemployment insurance; family allowances    | Decrease  |
| Greenwood and McDowell (2011) | 86 countries of origin | Social insurance            | Old-age pensions; sickness and maternity benefits; unemployment insurance;                      | Decrease  |



|                                       |  |                          |   |   |
|---------------------------------------|--|--------------------------|---|---|
|                                       |  |                          | family allowances   |   |
| Lopez-Garcia and Orraca-Romano (2019) | Mexico   | Seguro Popular           | Free medical care   | Mixed outcomes - no effect (international), increase (return)   |
| Mahe (2020)                           | Mexico   | Seguro Popular           | Free medical care   | Mixed outcomes - Increase (internal), no change (international) |
| OECD (2017a)                          | Georgia, Costa Rica, Armenia, Dominican Republic, Morocco, Cote d'Ivoire | Social insurance         | Pension plan; health benefits; other subsidies; work benefits                                     | Mixed outcomes – international and return                       |
| Sana and Hu (2007)                    | Mexico   | Social insurance         | Unemployment insurance; disability pay; free medical care; day-care for children; old age pension | Decrease  |
| Sana and Massey (2000)                | Mexico   | Social insurance         | Unemployment insurance; disability pay; free medical care; day-care for children; old age pension | Decrease  |
| Chau, et al. (2012)                   | China  | Yigong-daizhen programme | Public works scheme   | Increase  |

|  |          |   |                       |  |
|--|----------|---|-----------------------|--|
| Gazeaud et al (2019)                       | Comoros  | Comoros Social Safety Net Program (SSNP)                | Cash-for-work program | Increase   |
| Hoddinott et al (2020)                     | Ethiopia | Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP)         | Public works scheme   | Decrease   |
| Eshun and Dichaba (2019)                   | Ghana    | Labor Intensive Public Work (LIPW)                      | Public works scheme   | No impact  |
| Namara et al (2018)                        | Ghana    | Labour Intensive Public Works (LIPW)                    | Public works scheme   | Mixed outcomes - No impact (quantitative, decrease (qualitative))        |
| Centre for Science and Environment. (2008) | India    | India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) | Public works scheme   | Mixed outcomes - No change (Nuapada district), decrease (Sidhi district) |
| Deshingkar et al (2010)                    | India    | India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) | Public works scheme   | No impact (but some decrease of distress migration)                      |
| Imbert and Papp (2020)                     | India    | India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) | Public works scheme   | Decrease   |

|  |       |   |                     |           |
|--|-------|---|---------------------|-----------|
| Jacob (2008)                               | India | India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) | Public works scheme | No impact |
| National Federation of Indian Women (2008) | India | India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) | Public works scheme | No impact |
| Papp (2012)                                | India | India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) | Public works scheme | Decrease  |
| Parida (2016)                              | India | India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) | Public works scheme | Decrease  |
| Ravi et al. (2012)                         | India | India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) | Public works scheme | Decrease  |
| Dodd et al. (2018)                         | India | India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) | Public works scheme | No impact |
| Sudarshan et al. (2010)                    | India | India's National Rural Employment                       | Public works scheme | No impact |

| Guarantee Act (NREGA)     |                                      |  |   |           |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|---|-----------|
| Rosas and Sabarwal (2016) | Sierra Leone                         | Youth Employment Support Project   | Cash-for-work program   | Increase  |
| OECD (2017c)              | Cambodia                             | Not specified  | Food and cash-for-work  | Increase  |
| Deshingkar et al (2015)   | Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Malawi | PSNP (Ethiopia); HSNP (Kenya); TASAF-II (Tanzania); Mchinji cash transfer programme (Malawi) | Employment guarantee scheme (PSNP); Unconditional Cash transfer (PSNP and Mchinji) and Conditional Cash Transfer (TASAF II) | No impact |
| Oryema (2017)             | Uganda                               | Unconditional cash transfers, inputs and livestock transfers                                 | Cash transfers to the elderly and child headed families; live animals; agricultural inputs; basic household items           | Decrease  |

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## Cover image

Receiving cash transfers – Sierra Leone. Photo by Dominic Chavez/World Bank . CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

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