

Chicken or Egg? A bi-directional analysis of social protection and social cohesion in

Burundi and Haiti

Abstract

A limited but growing number of studies point to mixed effects of social protection on social cohesion. Relatively little is known about the role of social cohesion on access to and impact of social protection. Based on in-depth qualitative research in Burundi and Haiti, this paper explores the bi-directional relationship between social protection and social cohesion. The analysis focuses on horizontal forms of social cohesion within a particular set of comprehensive interventions that provide bundled packages of support to the poorest and most vulnerable. We find that programmes strengthened attributes of social cohesion, such as dignity and positive identity. They also hampered elements of cohesion such as sense of belonging and togetherness. Stronger cohesion, mediated through community trust and collaboration, fostered positive programme impacts. The paper concludes that social dynamics at community, family and individual levels should receive greater attention in design and implementation of social protection to avoid unintended consequences and maximise programme impact across social and other dimensions.

1. Introduction

A growing evidence base considers the linkages between social protection and social cohesion. Findings suggest that the effect of social protection on social cohesion can be both positive and negative. On the one hand, participation in social protection can instil a sense of

dignity, foster engagement and integration into the community, and strengthen informal reciprocal and community support mechanisms (Barca et al. 2015, Pavanello et al. 2016). On the other hand, stringent targeting and exclusion from programmes in contexts of widespread need, discretionary provision of support, and lack of accountability on behalf of service providers can undermine trust within communities (Ellis 2012, Devereux et al. 2017). Notwithstanding this growing body of literature, mechanisms, programme implementation and contextual factors that play into positive or negative social effects are relatively poorly understood.

Furthermore, most research in this area has focused on the effect of social protection on social cohesion, but evidence is limited in terms of how social cohesion mediates access to and impact of social protection. Studies have provided insight into how interventions reshape horizontal relationships between community members and vertical relationships with the state (Molyneux et al. 2016). However, little attention has been paid to reverse causality: i.e. the extent to which existing levels of social cohesion serve as a precondition for or contribute to the success of social protection interventions. For example, the shape and strength of social relations often play an important role in accessing social protection, with those most vulnerable and marginalised often holding less access to such social resources (Pouw et al. 2020). It follows that those in extreme poverty do not always benefit from social protection as is intended (ibid).

In this paper, we seek to add to the knowledge base by investigating the effect of social protection on social cohesion as well as the role that social cohesion plays in the success of social protection. We do so by focusing on horizontal forms of social cohesion, meaning the relations between members of society (Burchi et al., forthcoming). We zoom in on a particular

type of multi-layered and bundled social protection interventions, namely ‘graduation programmes’. These programmes offer participants a comprehensive package of support over a limited period of time, aiming to set them on a virtuous pathway out of poverty (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler 2015). Using qualitative data, we assess how programme participation both affected and depended on the strength of horizontal relationships between family and community members. We do so for two programmes – one in Burundi and one in Haiti – in contexts of pervasive poverty and widespread fragility.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows. First, we provide a brief overview of literature on social cohesion and the linkages between social protection and social cohesion, culminating in a conceptual framework to underpin our analysis. Second, we discuss the case studies in Burundi and Haiti before providing an overview of data and methodology. Third, we discuss findings for linkages between social protection and social inclusion and vice versa. In the final section, we reflect on these results and offer concluding remarks.

2. Literature review and conceptual framework

In this section, we offer a brief review of literature on the concept of social cohesion, and on linkages between social protection and social cohesion. In doing so, we identify research gaps that this research seeks to fill, establish our conceptual framework, and clarify the parameters for this study.

2.1. Understanding social cohesion

Social relations form a core component across understandings and conceptualisations of social cohesion (Babajanian, 2012; Schiefer and Van der Noll, 2017; Burchi et al. 2020). The literature points to a wide but overlapping set of factors that underpin such relationships.

Burchi et al (2020) highlight elements of trust, inclusive identity and cooperation for the common good. Taylor and Davis (2018) refer to relationships between members of a group, and those relationships being characterised by proximity, coordination and stability. Aiming to use the concept of social cohesion for empirical analysis, Schiefer and Van der Noll (2017) highlight components of trust, participation, identification and sense of responsibility, among others. In addition, they describe three dimensions that co-relate as antecedents or consequences of social cohesion, such as shared values, equality, power relations and perceptions of quality of life (ibid). Ultimately, social cohesion is a dynamic and context-specific concept, with the degree of cohesion manifested in the attitudes and behaviours of groups and their members embedded in local and social norms. Jones and Shahrokh (2013) remind us that pathways towards social inclusion are interconnected at every level of society, taking shape at individual, household and community level.

Against this backdrop, we approach social cohesion through the lens of social relations. We do so by acknowledging the multiple levels at which relations play out, and by keeping an eye on key aspects that can be considered constitutive of such relationships. Building on the conceptual framing for social cohesion as laid out in the introduction to this Special Issue (Burchi et al., forthcoming), this study focuses specifically on horizontal social cohesion, zooming in on relationships between community and household members (as opposed to vertical relations between programme beneficiaries and programme staff, or between communities and the state). In keeping with Burchi et al. (forthcoming) and drawing on wider conceptualisations of social cohesion, we explore how attributes of social cohesion such as trust, identity, shared values, equality, dignity and belonging play out in intra-family and intra-community relationships. These attributes are interconnected, overlapping and fluid, as evidenced by the scholarly debate on the conceptualisation of social cohesion (e.g. Beauvais,

C. and J. Jenson 2002, Novy et al 2012). For the purposes of this study, we understand trust as the willingness to cooperate with others (Chan et al, 2006) on the understanding that others' actions are primarily informed by good intentions (Schiefer and van der Noll 2017); identity as attachment to place and group (Chan et al, 2006); shared values as common goals and objectives of a certain group (Schiefer and van der Noll 2017); equality as low levels of socioeconomic differentiation and equity in access to rights (Babajanian 2012); dignity as being recognised as human and afforded opportunities (Babajanian 2012, Council of Europe 2005); and belonging a sense of membership of a social group (Schiefer and van der Noll 2017).

2.2. Effects of social protection on social cohesion

Mounting evidence points to the positive potential for social protection to strengthen horizontal social cohesion. At the same time, interventions may also undermine relations at the community and family level.

On the positive side, participation in social protection can foster a sense of dignity and respect, thereby enhancing community relations. Income provided through cash transfers, for example, removes economic and social barriers to participation in social events at community level. In Nepal, 80 percent of beneficiaries of the Child Grant indicated that the programme had changed their ability to participate in social activities (Adhikari et al. 2014). Cash transfers helped beneficiaries to attend social events and festivals such as marriage and religious ceremonies. Physical payment of grants at village offices on stipulated dates stimulated positive social interaction among beneficiaries, particularly when walking in groups to the local offices where payments were made (ibid). In Uganda, beneficiaries of the Senior Citizen Grant (SCG) indicated that the cash allowed them to be more 'presentable',

leading them to interact more with others, hence solidifying social contacts (Bukuluki and Watson 2012). Most beneficiaries reported that the cash had improved their self-esteem, status and empowerment, and enabled them to be active members of their households and communities, rather than burdens (ibid). Increased participation in community activities has also been observed in relation to the former conditional cash transfer programme *Oportunidades* in Mexico (Holmes and Slater 2007) and the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) cash transfer scheme in Ghana (de Milliano et al 2021). Recipients of the Kalomo social cash transfer in Zambia found that other community members were more willing to loan them money (Wietler 2007). In Kenya, cash transfers also helped orphans and vulnerable children to be accepted by other children into a community of peers and to enhance their social capital and networks (Onyango-Ouma and Samuels 2012; Jones and Samuels 2015).

Many interventions are also found to improve relations at household and family level. A cross-country study of cash transfer interventions in Kenya, Palestine and Peru found that greater availability of cash reduced tension, stress and anxiety in the household (Jones and Samuels 2015). Another cross-country study of cash transfer and public works programmes in Ghana, Rwanda and South Africa also observed improved caregiver-child relationships as cash transfers allowed for basic needs to be met and for poverty-induced stress to be reduced (Author et al. 2017). In Uganda, the SCG also improved relations at family level as beneficiaries were better able to meet their basic needs, thereby reducing their age-related dependency on their children or other relatives (Bukuluki and Watson 2012).

Effects of social protection, and cash transfers, in particular, are not always positive. The practice and process of targeting support to sub-sections within communities can be divisive

(Mkandawire 2005, White et al, 2017) and result in social tension (Devereux et al, 2017), especially if it facilitates 'leap-frogging' and elevates programme beneficiaries' income above that of their neighbours (Ellis 2012). In Zambia, cash transfer beneficiaries in rural areas experienced a negative response from the people around them. People "talked around" and "did not feel happy about her (the beneficiary) getting transfers" (Wietler 2007). These complaints were not openly expressed but beneficiaries have the vague feeling that members of the community begrudge them of the fact that they receive the transfers (ibid). Similarly in Lesotho and Malawi, lack of comprehension of targeting criteria and targeting choices seemingly arbitrary or linked to favouritism led to programme beneficiaries being resented by other community members (Ansell et al, 2019). In relation to Mexico's former *Oportunidades*, civil society organisations reported that the intervention could not address issues of social cohesion because it created divisions within the community through targeting some members and not others (Holmes and Slater 2007). Research in Indonesia found that the Bantuan Langsung Tunai (BLT) cash transfer had adverse impacts on social relations through jealousy on the part of non-recipients and a withdrawal of support for collective public and civic work with non-recipients demonstrating their displeasure and sense of exclusion from the community by withdrawing their labour (Hossain et al. 2012). However, it should be noted that most of these effects were temporary and were observed during the initial implementation of the programme.

Finally, the provision of formal forms of social protection can lead to 'crowding out' of informal transfers, thereby weakening existing mechanisms of community and family level types of support. In Uganda, the SCG was associated with reducing family support, including remittances and intra-family transfers, and other forms of informal support to older people

(Bukuluki and Watson 2012). In Ghana, participation in the national health insurance scheme led to crowding out of informal transfers (Strupat and Klohn 2018). Similarly, a study on Vietnam shows that the provision of public transfers crowds out altruistically motivated domestic and international remittances (La and Xu 2017). These reductions in informal transfers are not necessarily a negative effect as it relieves pressure on social network partners who often have limited resources themselves. As noted by Strupat and Klohn (2018), formal schemes such as health insurance could support everyone to develop their full economic potential. In China, additional cash from the New Rural Pension Scheme, allowed pension-eligible elderly to be less likely to rely on adult children for care when they were ill (Eggleston et al., 2018).

Different effects of social protection on social cohesion often co-exist and are at play simultaneously. In reference to the Mchinji Social Cash Transfer Scheme in Malawi and the Zimbabwe Emergency Cash Transfer, for example, MacAuslan and Riemenschneider (2011) observe that the impact of programmes is mixed. On the one hand they allow for participants within the programme to befriend and support each other, to relieve the community at large from having to support the poorest and for intra-household tensions to be eased. On the other hand, stringent targeting and politicised implementation thereof sowed jealousy and distrust among community members. Pavanello et al. (2016) also point to mixed effects of cash transfers in West Bank and Gaza, Uganda and Kenya. They found that programmes promoted social participation, especially among participants as the programme afforded opportunities to meet and interact. This dynamic was reported to support social connectedness as well as feelings of mutual support, solidarity, and dignity. This was especially prevalent among female participants and older persons, who are more likely to be

socially isolated. In the West Bank and Gaza and Kenya, they also observed that interventions led to feelings of unfairness on behalf of non-participants and subsequently to jealousy and resentment. Stringent targeting and lack of transparency about eligibility criteria and identification of programme participants contributed to envy and intra-community tensions.

Research of the effect of multi-layered interventions – such as graduation programmes – on social cohesion is limited. Available studies provide interesting observations about the effects of different programme components. In Malawi, Burchi and Roscoli (2021) found that the lump-sum transfer provided through Tingathe Economic Empowerment Project does not influence social cohesion. However, participation in joint training and savings and lending groups led to greater intra-group trust and cooperation. At the same time, the programme also caused tension and jealousy in the wider community as participants in savings and lending groups also received regular cash transfers through Malawi’s Social Cash Transfer programme.

2.3. Effects of social cohesion on social protection

Empirical evidence regarding the role of social cohesion on access to and impact of social protection is relatively thin. Various scholars have argued for greater focus on this link. Pouw et al (2020) argue that social dimensions are both an outcome of social protection as well as a conditioning factor for the impact of social protection. Social relationships, for example, can be an important determinant for accessing social protection. Devereux et al. (2013) posit that the context within social protection is implemented - including social dynamics – is vital for interventions to affect change as envisaged.

A small research base attests to the role of social relations in accessing social protection or facilitating the impact of social protection interventions. In a cross-country study of cash

transfer, livelihoods and social insurance schemes in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India and Nepal, Babajanian et al. (2014) found that discriminatory behaviour and unequal relations between social groups negatively affected the outcomes of these interventions. For instance, social discrimination in India against marginalised groups contributed to limited awareness of rights and of the ability to claim such rights in relation to national health insurance. Perceived discrimination is also apparent in terms of service delivery with Dalits and Muslims more likely to face discriminatory behaviour. In Afghanistan, the effect of the livelihoods programme was curtailed by prescribed gender roles that constrained women's involvement in the labour market and therefore women's ability to benefit from the programme. In Indonesia, areas with high social cohesion prior to the implementation of the BLT cash transfer scheme were relatively quick to bounce back from tensions and jealousy as a result of the programme being targeted to a sub-section within the community (Hossain et al., 2012).

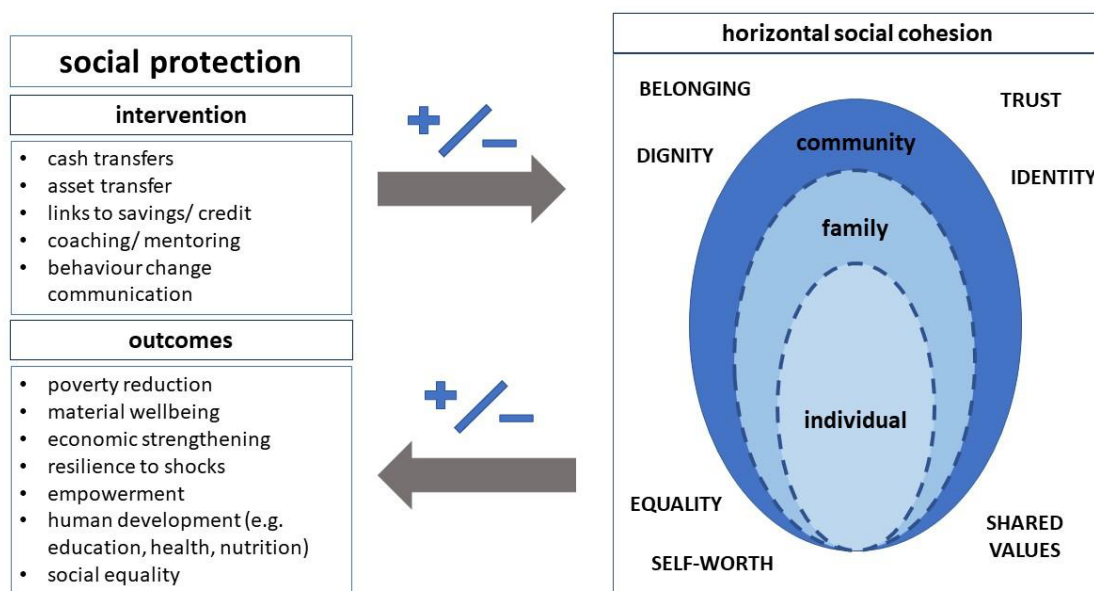
2.4. Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework underpinning this study builds on the literature review above and the conceptual framing for social cohesion as laid out in the introduction to this Special Issue (Burchi et al. forthcoming). As presented in Figure 1, the framework points to the bi-directional effects of social protection on social cohesion and vice versa and flags that these effects can be both positive and negative. It also specifies our focus on horizontal social cohesion, and on experiential and subjective (as opposed to observable and objective) elements of social cohesion (Chan et al 2006).

Design and implementation of social protection interventions are vital for how they affect horizontal social cohesion. The diagram lists design and implementation elements that are core to multi-layered and bundled graduation programmes. These include cash and asset

transfers, links to savings and credit mechanisms, coaching and mentoring as well as behaviour change communication. As noted in the literature review, these components can – individually or jointly – create, positively reinforce or undermine aspects of horizontal social cohesion such as trust, identity, shared values, equality, self-worth, dignity and belonging. The diagram also illustrates that this may play out at various levels, including intra-family and intra-community relationships. Conversely, aspects of social cohesion can also affect access to and outcomes of social protection, or the extent to which interventions are able to achieve these. Effects on poverty reduction, economic strengthening, shock resilience, empowerment and human development are mitigated by the strength of relationships, which in turn are underpinned by elements such as trust, identity and belonging.

Figure 1 Conceptual framework – bi-directional effect of social protection on horizontal cohesion



Based on the literature review above, we hypothesise that the implementation of graduation programmes can positively affect horizontal social cohesion by instilling dignity,

strengthening self-worth and identity, and promoting a sense of belonging on behalf of the participants. By the same token, programmes' stringent targeting procedures could undermine trust, challenge shared values, undermine perceived or actual levels of equality, and weaken feelings of belonging, particularly among non-participants. Conversely, fraught social relations and community fragmentation may hamper access to social protection for some, while strong social and family relations can be an important prerequisite for or reinforce positive impacts. Trust, shared values and a sense of belonging at family and community level may be vital for collective activities such as savings and lending groups to function properly or for individual economic initiatives to be successful. Finally, we should note that social cohesion is not static, it shifts and changes over time and is impacted by factors outside of social protection. The effect of social protection on elements of social cohesion and vice versa will also differ depending on the strength of social cohesion as the intervention was rolled out.

3. Case studies and data

This research is based on case studies of graduation programmes in Burundi and Haiti. Both countries are among the poorest in the world and marred by climatic and natural hazards and intermittent periods of conflict. At the time of data collection, communities included in the research in Burundi were recovering from a drought as well as a period of political turmoil that severely affected agricultural production and household income. In Haiti, communities in our study sites are vulnerable to recurring tropical storms and earthquakes leading to highly precarious livelihoods. Due to their remoteness, communities are relatively sheltered from the violent consequences of conflict but do suffer from the more insidious effects of political tension, including low trust in government. Informal networks and social support can be

bolstered by communities pulling together to cope with hazards such as earthquakes (Calo-Blanco et al, 2017) and storms (Sweet 1998) but can also be eroded due to increased competition over scarce resources (Gleditsch 1998). Conflict is generally found to harm social cohesion as it undermines social trust and can negatively affect social identity (Fiedler and Rohles, 2021). As such, insights gleaned from these case studies hold particular relevance in relation to social protection in fragile settings, and notably shock-responsive social protection (O'Brien et al 2018).

We provide contextual information, offer available information on social inclusion, discuss the intervention, and present the data and methods for each country case study.

3.1. Burundi

Burundi is one of the poorest countries in the world, ranking 185 out of 189 on the Human Development Index (UNDP 2020). It is also extremely vulnerable to climate change, with extreme weather events such as floods and landslides having caused all forced displacement in 2020 (Voegele et al, 2021). The country also experienced waves of population displacement as a result of violent conflict, such as the civil wars in the 1990s (Vervisch et al, 2013). The ethnic character of those civil wars, and the history that led up to ongoing conflicts, has led many to point at social capital being shaped along ethnic lines (Vervisch et al. 2013). However, beyond the major ethnic faultlines, more complex social relationships exist depending on political allegiance, whether one belongs to urban elite versus rural peasantry, or amongst the displaced, returnees and the diaspora.

In rural areas, where the graduation programme is implemented, social cohesion is still relatively strong. Traditional values such as tolerance, respect of the other, sharing of gifts and resources, and folkloric rituals and symbolism underpin social cohesion (Liaga and

Wielenga 2020). Remote rural communities rely on networks of reciprocal, hierarchical and interdependent relationships (Cieslik, 2016). Social cohesion largely revolves around the themes of 'living in harmony, getting along, helping out when someone is sick, celebrating births/marriage, giving gifts, and the absence of war' – each of which are ways community representatives across women's, youth, religious, traditional, governmental and non-governmental groups understand social cohesion (Besada, Wheaton, Bright and Tok, 2014, p.13). However, although these cultural practices, rules of kinship, patronage, and reciprocity still resonate strongly in rural communities and are foundational to horizontal forms of social cohesion, they have limited effect beyond their social circle of influence and hold limited impact on central (Bujumbura) political spheres (Liaga and Wielenga 2020) and vertical dimension of social cohesion.

It is against this backdrop that we study Concern Worldwide's *Terintambwe* Graduation Model programme. The programme was launched in April 2013 in two provinces in the north of the country – Cibitoke and Kirundo. Over a period of roughly two years until May 2015, participants benefited from a carefully sequenced package of support, including: (i) 14 monthly cash transfers of 24,500 BiF (approximately 15 USD), or 343,000 BiF (approximately 200 USD) in total, (ii) three lump-sum payments to support investments in assets for setting up income-generating activities of 150,000 BiF in total (approximately 90 USD), (iii) support to join or establish a Savings and Internal Lending Community (SILC), (iv) skills training and coaching, including group-based training about livelihoods activities as well as nutrition and hygiene and individual coaching through home visits by case managers, and (v) provision of health insurance cards for free use of health care. The programme was targeted at households living in extreme poverty but with at least one able-bodied adult household member. The two-stage selection process involved community committees creating a list of potential

beneficiaries, which was subsequently then verified by fieldworkers. Since its launch, the programme has been rolled out to other provinces, including Bubanza province in the west of the country.

3.2. Haiti

Haiti ranks 170 out of 189 on the Human Development Index (UNDP 2020) and the latest poverty estimates suggest that more than half of its population live in poverty (World Bank 2018). The country frequently experiences natural disasters, including devastating earthquakes in 2010 and 2021 and a hurricane in 2016. Haiti also has a chequered political history marked by turmoil and conflict, with the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse having intensified instability. Throughout this history, the country has operated on a strong social structure that is broadly organized along three categories: the upper class (political elite), middle class (with moderate income and professional occupations), and the 'impoverished' mass (Smucker 1999, p.330-3). The majority of the country's population can be categorised as the latter.

In rural areas, social networks are rooted in kinship, patron-client relations, and other special ties and obligations (Smucker, 1999). From the perspective of horizontal social cohesion, farmers historically organised small rotating labour groups and work parties to exchange family labour and meet agriculture's intensive peak labour demands. *Lakou*, referring to the traditional rural family structure where a group of dwellings are occupied by a single family or extended families living under the authority of a family chief (Bastien 1985, cited in Lamaute-Brisson 2010), has been another important mechanism for sharing and collaboration in rural communities. Although the *lakou* system has drastically reduced from its original form and extent, extended family relations and networks remain crucial for young mothers for child

care support when they are away from home working (Lamaute-Brisson 2010). Forms of community solidarity have also been promoted through foreign development agencies as a self-help strategy to foster community development (Smucker 1999).

In this context, we zoom in on Fonkoze's *Chemen Lavi Miyò* (CLM) programme. The CLM programme was first piloted in 2007 (Huda and Simanowitz 2010) and has been implemented in different areas in central Haiti since. Over a period of 18 months, the programme offers intensive and tailored support, including: (i) weekly stipends of 350 Haitian Gourdes (approximately 13 USD) during the first six months of implementation; (ii) asset transfer (approximately 155 USD), (iii) support to join Village Savings and Lending Association (VSLA), (iv) home visits by case managers, including health and nutrition messaging, and (v) in-kind support such as housing materials and access to the local hospital. The programme is targeted at women – often with young children – living in extreme poverty. Selection is first based on participatory wealth rankings at the community-level, followed by verification by CLM programme staff based on pre-determined criteria.

3.3. Methodology

In Burundi, qualitative data was collected in 2018 in Bubanza and Cibitoke provinces as part of wider qualitative research on graduation trajectories, intra-household dynamics and social cohesion. A total of 8 key informant interviews (KIIs), 8 focus group discussions (FGDs) and 8 case studies (CSs) were undertaken with programme participants (male and female) and programme staff. Data collection was based on semi-structured discussions as well as interactive activities such as ranking exercises. In Cibitoke province, participants were nearing the end of the project cycle; in Bubanza province, the programme had just started. This

research followed a quasi-experimental impact evaluation from 2013-2015 (Devereux et al. 2015, Author 2019).

In Haiti, in-depth qualitative data was collected in 2018 in the Central Plateau region as part of a broader study on the links between comprehensive social protection and early childhood development. Data collection centred on multiple participatory activities with 24 female programme participants. This was complemented by 30 FGDs with programme participants and their spouses and community members and by 8 KIIs with programme staff. This research fed into a wider mixed-methods quasi-experimental impact evaluation that considered the impact of the CLM programme on childhood development and child wellbeing (Author et al. 2019).

Existing coding frameworks developed for the research projects' original purposes were revisited and adapted as necessary to reflect the themes explored in this study. Using NVivo (v.12), co-authors jointly analysed data using repurposed coding frameworks to ensure consistency within and across case studies. In both country case studies, data were analysed using thematic analysis (Author 2019, Author et al. 2019). In line with our conceptual framework, we present the analysis by grouping main findings at levels of intra-community relationships, intra-family dynamics and individual attributes.

It should be noted that we did not attempt to measure social cohesion or its attributes, to estimate social protection's differential effect on these, or to establish a ranking of which attributes of social cohesion may be more or less important in supporting the impact of social protection. We used thematic analysis of in-depth qualitative data to gain nuanced and context-specific insight into respondents' self-reported experiences on bi-directional linkages between programme participation and elements of horizontal social cohesion.

4. Findings: Programme participation and its effects on social cohesion

In this section we discuss the impact of graduation programmes on horizontal social cohesion, zooming in on effects at community, household and individual level.

4.1. Intra-community relationships

Programmes in both countries have mixed effects on intra-community cohesion.

In Burundi, *Terintambwe* has a positive effect on participants' integration within the community. Findings indicate that this effect is strongly mediated through the availability of economic resources. Greater income – at first due to cash provided through the programme and then as a result of income generated through livelihood activities promoted through the programme – allows for the purchase of clothing and means that participants can buy on credit and contribute at events such as baptisms and weddings. This translates into greater respect by others and greater feelings of self-esteem, as illustrated by female participants:

“I was discriminated by people in the community. I was also underestimating myself, but it has changed now. For instance, there was a meeting this Thursday at Croix Rouge office and I attended it. I was proud to participate where administrators and other authorities were invited.” [B-Br-FGD-F-W9]

Programme participation also made it more likely for participants to be visited by others, to be asked for advice or to take part in social gatherings. The explanation is two-fold. First, greater economic resources afforded by the programme meant that it was no longer necessary for participants to ask for money from others when they were visiting or visited by others. Second, being a programme participant sparked interest and curiosity from other

community members, in some cases to learn from the programme themselves. One male participant indicated:

“There is a neighbour who came to visit me and asked me to go to his home to help him install the hand-washing system. He appreciated that we learned interesting things and have community benefits. This person did not visit me before.” [B-Br-FGD-M-M2]

Respondents spoke about enhanced social relations between programme participants in both Burundi and Haiti. In Haiti, participants referred to ‘CLM friends’ or ‘CLM family’ as trusted members of their social network with whom they share food and discuss issues, and to whom they turn when in need of advice or financial support. Collaboration among participants appears promoted within the CLM programme, as noted by a female participant: *“[I help] the CLM members, because at the training they say we need to stick together, and if I need to borrow, I can borrow from them.”* [LCCSCLM2-1]

Support amongst CLM participants seems particularly strong and beneficial when family relations and community support network linkages are strained or weak. The newfound ‘CLM family’ can fill this gap:

“My own family hates me due to conflicts over land. [...] around here there is no one to give you advice. I am part of a family; that is CLM. Yes, the CLM family gives me advice.”
[LCCSSPOUSE2-4]

However, some respondents alluded to this ‘CLM friendship’ as one that comes with strings attached. One respondent voiced frustration over other CLM participants visiting her but without offering to help out with house construction. Another respondent indicated feeling bad about the inability to offer food to other CLM participants when they came over to visit.

It should also be noted that not all respondents considered other CLM participants to be their friends. Although still referring to them as 'CLM friends', a female respondent who runs a small business spoke adamantly about how she did not trust other participants as they had not paid her for items that they bought from her on credit.

Programme participation also affected relationships between participants and other community members. In Burundi, *Terintambwe* participants reportedly felt pressurised into helping community members, even if they lacked time or resources. Some participants shared their money, especially with close relatives such as siblings or in-laws, to maintain good relationships. It is understood that being a *Terintambwe* participant and the receipt of economic support comes with the responsibility to respond to others' requests who are not part of the programme. Experiences of this new responsibility are mixed, with some respondents experiencing it as an obligation and others noting how it forged new connections within the community. A response by a male programme participant highlights the duality of this experience.

"We were not helping each other before the programme. The programme taught us to live well in the community and it has changed our relationships. For example, someone could ask me to accompany him to hospital during the night, and I could tell him that I am very tired and that I will go to see him the next day. Now, when I am at home, I must accompany them whether I am tired or not. You cannot lack something when they have it in the neighbourhood. You can lend a hoe or cans to fetch water. Before the programme, people could refuse to lend their cans saying that they contain water. Now, even when cans contain water, they give it to you and ask you to bring it back full." [C-Bu-CS-M]

In both contexts, the programmes also gave rise to community tensions. In Burundi, jealousy was widespread in communities where *Terintambwe* was implemented. This manifested itself through programme participants being mocked in public, being refused support by community members or other hostilities. A female programme participant indicated:

“People in the community are jealous. For instance, I was a Terintambwe beneficiary when I moved to this place. Some of the neighbours were expecting me to ask them salt or other things and they became jealous as I never did it. I was in the same compound with my neighbour, but now she has built a fence to separate our houses.” [C-Bu-CS-F]

Jealousy is driven by participants’ increased incomes and their ability to afford certain produce (e.g. meat, salt, soap clothes, other material items), to upgrade their houses or to invest their money in income-generating activities. Jealousy is also caused by misunderstandings about targeting or rumours about the amount of money that participants obtain through the programme ‘for free’. Although various community meetings had been convened to explain eligibility criteria, the relatively opaque process of verification and widespread levels of deprivation within communities led to confusion and misgivings.

Participants apply different strategies to respond to feelings of jealousy from non-participants. For example, one male participant advised community members on how to become programme participants themselves in case *Terintambwe* continued. Another female participant preferred to buy fish rather than meat, even if she could afford it, to show community members that she remained “humble” and was not “better off” than others. In general, participants try not to respond to any provocations and to remain calm to avoid any disputes.

In some cases, programme staff were pivotal in resolving or at least reducing tensions over time. *Terintambwe* participants were advised to avoid conflict by first apologising and then try discussing the issue without shouting or becoming aggressive. When mocked or insulted by others, participants were advised to remain calm and to not answer back. Participants noted that they felt more accepted, trusted and respected by community members when they avoid disputes and remain sympathetic.

Respondents in Haiti also reported jealousy and tensions as a result of the CLM programme, although findings suggest that it was less widespread compared to the *Terintambwe* programme in Burundi. CLM members reported difficulties finding and arranging in-kind labour support such as helping out on the farm or occasional housework from neighbours since joining the CLM programme: *“Because it used to be that if you had work to do, you could find someone to help you, now they won’t help anymore.”* [LCFGSPOUSE2-2]. Such tensions did appear to lessen over time, particularly when the case managers stepped in to explain the situation.

4.2. Intra-family dynamics

Programme participation affected intra-family dynamics in both Burundi and Haiti, again with mixed outcomes.

In Haiti, disruptive family and spousal relationships are a common occurrence among CLM participants. Respondents pointed to the programme’s positive effect on such relations, primarily due to the role of case managers in resolving conflicts between female CLM participants and their spouses. The importance of harmonious relations and how to maintain them is discussed in group trainings and more tailored support is provided during home visits. Advice is directed at both women and men, emphasising that women should be able to earn

their own money and that collaboration between spouses will benefit everyone. One male spouse said:

“[CLM] has meant that I don’t act in the way I did before. ... As part of the training they have given us, they have shown us how to live well together with the husband, so that there is more harmony in your home life. It has given us advice about how to live together as a couple.” [LCCSSPOUSE2-2]

In Burundi, the *Terintambwe* programme tests and pushes the boundaries of prevailing gender norms. Respondents and programme staff noted that women’s increased incomes (especially when this is higher than that of their spouses) can lead to women becoming arrogant and disrespectful to their husbands. This leads to criticism of women and their spouses, with men less respected in the community when their wives have higher incomes than themselves. These outcomes were observed by male and female programme participants:

W6: *“You cannot live peacefully when you earn more than the husband. In the community, they say that you got that money from prostitution.” [C-Ma-FGD-Female]*

M2: *“In the community, the voice of the man is not heard when his wife earns more money than him. Usually, the household bears the name of the husband who is the household head. But when the wife earns more than the husband, in the community the household will bear her name. Consequently, it hurts the man’s pride.” [C-Ma-FGD-Male]*

Similar concerns were raised in Haiti, with pre-existing financial support from husbands being withdrawn when the wives received money directly from the programme.

“Sometimes, the husbands can turn against their wives because the women have someone who is giving them money. Sometimes, our husbands wait to see how much money we get from the Case Manager. Sometimes, after we get the money, they don’t give us money.” [LCFGCLM2-2]

On these occasions, programme staff advised women to share part of their income with their husbands or to discuss with them its allocation, both to avoid negative community perceptions and conflict in the household.

In contrast, male participants of the *Terintambwe* programme in Burundi who increased their incomes as a result of programme participation are respected and admired by community members as they are now able to sustain their families. Having adopted other positive behaviours such as limiting alcohol consumption or buying material items for their wives including clothes or body lotion also enhanced community members’ respect: *“When the wife doesn’t have decent clothes, it is the husband who will be criticized.” [C-Ma-FGD-M]*

The improved social standing of male participants also benefited their spouses’ social engagement within the communities. Male participants involved their wives in programme activities such as community savings and lending groups or farmer field schools, where women have responsibilities that also enhance their status and trust by others. Programme staff noted that these positive changes are more visible in couples that have harmonious relationships and strong communication.

4.3. Individual-level attributes

Interventions in both Burundi and Haiti prove powerful in enhancing individual factors that underpin social cohesion such as self-esteem, hope and identity. Increased incomes, and

crucially the ability to earn this income independently from others, led to enhanced dignity and self-respect.

For *Terintambwe* participants in Burundi, being able to earn their money independently and to achieve goals such as building houses, sending their children to school and investing in their outward appearance, improved their perception of themselves and standing among others: “[...] *We are well dressed. We wear slippers and we can stay with others without shame.* [B-Br-FGD-F-W3].

Programme participation afforded a sense of agency, especially making women feel more empowered to take their roles in community meetings. This increased social position and self-confidence motivate female participants to speak in public without shyness and build new relationships with other women they did not interact before *Terintambwe*:

“[T]he programme has given me power. Before the programme, I hadn’t any means. I was working for others in order to live. Now, I have pigs and I sell. Thus, I am respected in the community” [Ci-Ma-FGD-F-W1]

Similar positive effects can be observed in Haiti. Respondents indicated that CLM participants feel ‘proud’ [LCCSSPOUSE2-2] and that the programme increases self-esteem and ‘hope’ [MBCSCLM5-4]. One participant noted: *“I didn’t trust myself because I lived badly, I had no hope, now thanks to CLM even if things don’t go well yet, but something has started to change in my life”* [MBFGCLM5].

We find that linkages between programme participation and individual-level attributes such as self-worth, dignity and identity are strongly gendered. In both Burundi and Haiti, programme participation affirmed gendered roles and responsibilities, particularly with

respect to caregiving and paid work. This affirmation served to boost self-respect and identity. In Haiti, male spouses of the CLM participants expressed a strong sense of responsibility as a father and main breadwinner, with the inability to fulfil those roles undermining self-worth:

“I sit down to think about how other people take care of their children, and I am not able. Sometimes I want to kill myself but I don’t because life is a ball and I have to accept it. I take a sickle and I work to take the children to school and to take care of them.” [MBCSCPOUSE5-3]

Female respondents in Haiti expressed similar views about their ability to fulfil their roles as primary caregivers. Poverty undermines this ability and strains their sense of self. The increase in economic resources through CLM allows for fulfilling these roles and promotes self-respect and dignity. Women in Burundi also valued their increased participation in economic activities through the *Terintambwe* programme. In addition, they also valued new knowledge related to maintenance of their homes and care of their children, allowing them to live up to expectations of motherhood.

5. Findings: Social cohesion and its effects on programme impact

In this section we assess the role of social cohesion, and particularly of horizontal relationships between participants and their family and community members, in achieving programme impact. Although findings point to misgivings about exclusion from the intervention, especially in Burundi, the available data does not provide enough information about whether community dynamics at play at the time of the selection process led to some individuals being deliberately in- or excluded.

5.1. Intra-community relationships

As noted in section 4.1, programmes in both Burundi and Haiti led to jealousy among non-participants. Findings suggest that such community tensions may undermine programme impact in two ways.

First, erosion of trust makes it harder to call upon community members for support. In Haiti, this especially manifested itself through difficulties in finding support to care for children when having to leave home for work. This was particularly problematic given already high levels of distrust in the community. As noted by one female participant:

“There are some neighbours I don’t trust, because not everyone acts the same way with children. That is why my husband doesn’t want me to leave them with just anyone, because they are jealous of him because of land, and he doesn’t want them to hurt the children.” [LCCSCLM2-4]

Second, jealousy and community tensions may make it harder for programme participants to make economic progress. For example, CLM participants in Haiti reported that other community members may not feel obliged to repay loans or pay for items purchased on credit as members are perceived to receive ‘free money’ through the CLM programme [MBCSCLM2-3].

Similarly, in some instances, jealousy amongst non-participants resulted in damage of assets provided through the CLM programmes, such as latrines, corrugated sheets and livestock. These tensions undermine the programme’s ability to affect positive change: *“[w]hen I see that their [my CLM friends’] animals are roaming around free, I take the animals, I call them so they come and fetch them. This way, other people won’t kill them”* [MKCSCLM5-1].

Crop damages from untethered grazing animals are severe offences in rural communities, and conflict resolution may be difficult when there is a lack of trust and a deep sense of inequity between the community members of those who received benefits and those who have not. Although there is no single explanation for such lack of trust, a recurrent theme in Haiti was the practice of *Vodoun* and strong concerns about spirits and the 'evil eye'. These beliefs appeared to severely constrain social support networks, leaving many participants with relatively small circles of trusted individuals whom they would rely on for support.

In Burundi, *Terintambwe* participants also indicated that their work opportunities reduced since they joined the programme. Some community members perceived them as potential employers who should offer jobs to other community members because they receive a 'monthly salary'. One male participant said: *"Before I was getting jobs, but now people say that I can hire someone to work for me because I am paid. Therefore, I don't get job opportunities like before."* [B-Bu-FGD-M]

At the same time, findings provide some indication of a positive feedback loop. As observed in section 4.1, programme participation can promote social relations and trust, particularly among programme participants, which can in turn foster collaboration to amplify programme impacts. In Burundi, one female *Terintambwe* participant said:

"When I joined the programme, I had a parcel given by the commune and I built a house of two rooms and a dining room made with bricks. I had the plot since a long time but I had not been able to build before the programme. Terintambwe participants helped to make bricks and it has encouraged me to hire workers to make more bricks and hire masons." [B-Bu-FGD-F]

5.2. Intra-family dynamics

Findings suggest that strong spousal relationships and family ties are vital for participants to make full use of the opportunities that are afforded by the programme.

In Haiti, this particularly pertains to the ability to juggle the set of paid and unpaid work activities and, notably, child care. The ability to entrust family or community members with the care of their children emerged as an important factor in ensuring that programme participants in Haiti can engage in economic activities as supported by the programme. This is illustrated by a female programme participant:

“My husband’s family [is important], because when I am not here, they take care of the children for me. My family, because they help the children out in many ways. They give them things when they have them. The neighbours I go to church with, because they bathe the children and fix their hair for me.” [LCCSCLM2-1]

In Burundi, some respondents pointed to how supportive family relationships allowed for exploring options on how to spend newly generated income:

*“Most of the time I ask my brother who lives in the neighborhood. For instance I can ask him how to use a thousand earned and he would tell me to use five hundred and save the rest as my kids can get sick anytime and money saved will help me.” [B-Bu-
FGD-F]*

In Haiti, the majority of CLM participants experienced unsupportive or disruptive family relationships, either within their household unit or within the extended family. This dampened their ability to fully exploit programme opportunities, having to choose to allocate their time between paid or unpaid work activities. One senior programme staff differentiated between three categories of spouses: (i) cooperative spouses, (ii) disruptive spouses and (iii) disengaged spouses, and related these categories to members’ progress in the programme.

Female participants with cooperative spouses were more likely to be ‘fast climbers’ and make good progress. By contrast, participants with disruptive or disengaged spouse were less likely to do well and to be categorised as ‘slow climbers’.

Programme staff reportedly played an important role in mediating these relationships and – in various cases – were successful in either fostering more positive spousal collaboration or, at the very least, avoiding further disruption. In some instances, women relied on other trusted family members to make best use of their newly generated income without their spouses interfering. One woman described how she trusted her brother to hide her newly purchased pig so her spouse would not find out [LCCSCLM5-1].

5.3. Individual-level attributes

As discussed in section 4.3, programme participation affirms gendered roles and responsibilities, which can in turn strengthen individual-level attributes of social cohesion. However, reinforcement of gendered roles and responsibilities may also undermine programme impact.

In Haiti, the burden of childcare and day-to-day household chores falls disproportionately to women, and significantly impacts their physical well-being. Unchanged gendered norms of motherhood and care duties mean that many programme participants experienced the drudgery of household work, despite a sense of responsibility and pride in fulfilling the care work:

“Sometimes when I finish washing dishes, my lower back aches and I can even feel dizzy but I still take care of my duties. [...] My wrists hurt when I wash the dishes and scour the pots, but after I see that the pots are shining and I feel proud. I can get a

headache when I carry water on my head, but when I have water in the house, I feel at ease. My lower back can hurt when I bathe the children, but I feel happy when I see them all freshened up. Preparing the meal makes me dizzy. But I am happy when I see the children eating.” [LCCSCLM2-1]

Difficulties in balancing paid and unpaid work activities challenged the female CLM participants’ ability to make full use of programme opportunities, and to care for their young infants throughout the day. For example, women need to make difficult choices between going to the market to earn money or to stay home to care for their children.

In Burundi, gender norms around husband and wives’ duties in the household also prevail. However, in contrast to Haiti, women in Burundi indicated they bring their children with them when working or they leave them with trustworthy neighbours or relatives. Juggling income generating activities, unpaid care and domestic work is seen by women as part of their new role, and did not emerge as a strong impediment to programme success.

6. Discussion and conclusion

This paper argues that social cohesion – and horizontal trust between households and within communities in particular – should be considered both a potentially positive outcome of social protection and a pre-condition for social protection to achieve positive outcomes.

We hypothesised that the implementation of graduation programmes can positively affect horizontal social cohesion by instilling dignity, strengthening self-worth and identity, and promoting a sense of belonging on participants. Conversely, targeting can disrupt perceived or actual levels of equality, and weaken feelings of belonging, particularly among non-participants. The presence of social cohesion – either at individual, family or community-level

– prior to programme participation fosters the ability for participants to make best use of programme opportunities, and to create positive feedback loops.

Findings from graduation programmes in Burundi and Haiti confirm that *social protection can strengthen and erode social cohesion*, and do so at the same time. It adds to the existing evidence base by highlighting the co-existence of positive and negative effects, and how programme participants must navigate these simultaneously. On the positive side, programmes supported participants to take part in public activities, collaborate with other participants, and interact more actively and meaningfully with community members. On the negative side, interventions led to jealousy and resentment within the community, with participants having to avoid or negotiate conflict. Participants also felt under pressure to provide support to other participants or the wider community, or to share their earnings with their closest relatives. The increased ability to support others appears a double-edged sword: while it brings pride and dignity to be called upon, it also comes with pressure and expectation to respond to requests for help. Participants had to implement their own strategies to overcome jealousy or to handle the increased responsibility such as avoiding responding to provocations, changing their consumption patterns, offering additional support or advice.

When looking at the effects of social cohesion on the outcomes of graduation programmes, our evidence highlights that the presence of social cohesion attributes is important to amplify effects of programmes. We found that *trust and strong social and household relationships were particularly important to foster the effects of social protection*. In Haiti, low levels of trust between community members reduces the potential positive effects on participants' economic empowerment, as participants are perceived to receive 'free money'. Existing low levels of trust also reduce the ability to request childcare or other support to juggle

programme activities with other work, household chores and care work. Conversely, strong relationships – between spouses, family and community members – facilitate the ability of programme participants to develop and engage in new productive activities while juggling the existing set of paid and unpaid work activities. In Burundi, findings suggest that participants in communities with stronger social ties prior to programme implementation were able to draw on support from community and family members to maximise benefits from programme participation, such as construction work or setting up new businesses.

Gender is a recurrent theme throughout this research. Programmes positively affected social cohesion when they reaffirmed existing gendered roles and responsibilities. When female participants used their increased income to affirm their prescribed identity as mothers and wives (e.g. sending children to school, building houses, investing on their physical appearance), this led to improved perceptions of others and to enhanced confidence and self-esteem. Conversely, when programme participation amplified those gendered roles and responsibilities, backlash emerged and social cohesion – particularly at family and community level – was challenged. In Burundi, husbands found it difficult to accept that women earned more money, in part because of how this reflected on them and diminished their role as bread winners. In Haiti, men withdrew economic support to their wives when the CLM programme was perceived as a substitute to their household contributions. Prevailing norms about care and domestic work in Haiti combined with women’s increased economic activities through the CLM programme negatively affected their health and wellbeing (due to overworking and strained relationships), and undermined their opportunity to benefit from the programme.

In neither Haiti or Burundi did programmes address the unbalanced distribution of care and domestic work between men and women. Thus, even if women improved their economic

status and their position in society through the programme, this came at a cost. While women are welcome to participate in income generating activities (as long as this income is not higher than that of their husbands), they are expected to remain responsible and maintain the same level of household chores and care duties. This issue was more prominent in Haiti where the programme was especially targeted at women. These findings confirm the importance of addressing gender norms directly by social protection programmes. Doing so can shift discriminatory social and gender norms (Plank, Marcus & Jones, 2018) and have a transformative effect that transforms broader structurally biased patriarchal influences (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004).

Finally, findings across this bi-directional analysis show that *programme staff can play an important role in mediating the linkages between social protection and social cohesion, and vice versa*. The case management approach in 'graduation programmes' allows for programme staff to intervene at a more personal level and in more tailored ways. Their interpersonal approach served as a positive catalyst in instilling the values of social cohesion, a mediator in brokering conflict resolutions in complex spousal and interfamily relations, and restoring mistrusts in the community in the early stage of programme interventions. In light of ongoing debates about the role of coaching and support within such programmes and the search for a cost-effective package of support, these findings suggest that the ability of programme staff to tailor their assistance and engage more relationally with the community members proved to be crucial in programme settings dealing with extreme poverty and highly vulnerable populations.

The choice of case studies in Burundi and Haiti makes the findings in this study relevant across a growing number of contexts prone to climatic and conflict-related shocks and

where some elements of social cohesion are likely in place while at the same time under pressure. As this study did not attempt to measure social cohesion or quantify attributes of social cohesion prior to or after programme implementation, further research is required to assess the relative importance of such attributes in fostering social protection's positive impact, or to estimate the impact of social protection on attributes of social cohesion. Mixed methods approaches that combine quantitative and qualitative techniques can advance this area of research further. Doing so will be of particular relevance to the growing field of shock-responsive social protection, which aims to support individuals, families and communities in contexts of recurrent natural hazards or conflict (O'Brien et al, 2018). This study shows that the efficacy of social protection in such contexts should be considered vis-à-vis its effects on and in interplay with social cohesion.

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