Journal de Recherche Multidisciplinaire
ISSN : 3088-5205 https://jorep.net

JOREP Journal de recherche multidisciplinaire

Volume : 1
Numéro : 2
Année : 2025
Mois : Mars

SOCIAL SAFETY NETS AND COMMUNAL SOLIDARITY SYSTEMS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MEXICO AND ETHIOPIA

Traore Ouattara Félicité [1]

Iradukunda Sengesho Benigne2

Nizeyimana Jean Baptiste3

1. Joint Reseacher at Lisala University and UNCR University, Economics, Faculty of Economics & Management
2. Joint MPhil Researcher at Lisala University and UNCR University, IT Department, Film and TV Production
3. Lecturer at Lisala University, Faculty of Psychology and Education, Department of Technopedagogy

ABSTRACT

Achieving SDG 1 (No Poverty) requires eradicating extreme poverty (Target 1.1), reducing at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty (Target 1.2), implementing nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all (Target 1.3), and building the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations (Target 1.5). Social safety nets, including cash transfers, food assistance, public works, school feeding, and fee waivers, are a primary policy instrument for reducing poverty and vulnerability in low- and middle-income countries. However, many societies also have indigenous communal solidarity systems, including

[1] Joint Reseacher at Lisala University and UNCR University, Biomedical Engineering, Faculty of Engineering

rotating savings groups, mutual aid associations, funeral societies, and kinship-based support networks, that predate formal social protection and continue to fill gaps where state provision is weak or absent.

This study conducts a comparative analysis of social safety nets and communal solidarity systems in Mexico and Ethiopia, two countries with contrasting economic profiles, poverty dynamics, and social protection histories but shared reliance on informal solidarity networks. Mexico, an upper-middle-income country, has a long history of social protection, including the pioneer conditional cash transfer programme Progresa, later Oportunidades and Prospera, and now the comprehensive Bienestar system. Ethiopia, a low-income country, has one of Africa's largest social protection programmes, the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), reaching 8 million people annually.

Using a qualitative comparative case study methodology, the study analyzes secondary data from government reports, international databases, and peer-reviewed literature over the period 2000 to 2025. The study finds that both countries rely on hybrid social protection, combining formal safety nets with informal solidarity systems. Mexico's Progresa and its successors have reduced poverty but persistent inequality remains, with indigenous populations facing higher poverty rates. Communal solidarity systems such as tequio and guelaguetza remain strong in indigenous communities but are under pressure from migration and urbanization. Ethiopia's PSNP reduces food insecurity and protects assets but is chronically underfunded and donor-dependent. Indigenous solidarity systems such as iqqub, idir, and debo remain widespread but face climate and economic shocks.

The study concludes that effective poverty reduction requires integrated approaches that strengthen formal social protection while supporting communal solidarity systems in complementarity. Recommendations for both countries and the international community are provided.

Keywords: Social safety nets; communal solidarity; Mexico; Ethiopia; SDG 1; conditional cash transfers; Productive Safety Net Programme; idir; iqqub; tequio

RÉSUMÉ

Atteindre l'ODD 1 (Pas de pauvreté) nécessite d'éradiquer la pauvreté extrême et de mettre en place des systèmes nationaux de protection sociale. Les filets de sécurité sociale sont un instrument essentiel de réduction de la pauvreté. Cette étude analyse les filets de sécurité sociale et les systèmes de solidarité communautaire au Mexique et en Éthiopie. Le Mexique dispose d'un système complet de protection sociale (Bienestar), y compris les transferts monétaires conditionnels (Progresa, Oportunidades, Prospera). Les systèmes de solidarité communautaire comprennent le tequio (travail communautaire obligatoire), la guelaguetza (échange de cadeaux) et les caisses d'épargne communautaires. L'Éthiopie dispose du Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), l'un des plus grands programmes de protection sociale en Afrique (8 millions de bénéficiaires). Les systèmes de solidarité communautaire comprennent l'iqqub (épargne rotative), l'idir (société funéraire) et le debo (partage de la main-d'œuvre). L'étude conclut que la réduction de la pauvreté nécessite des approches hybrides (filets de sécurité formels et systèmes de solidarité communautaire). Des recommandations sont fournies pour les deux pays et la communauté internationale.

Mots-clés : filets de sécurité sociale, solidarité communautaire, Mexique, Éthiopie, ODD 1, transferts monétaires conditionnels, PSNP, idir, iqqub, tequio

Suumis le : 17 Mars , 2026
Publié le : 08 Jun **, 2026**
Auteurs correspondant: *traore ouattara felicite, Iradukunda Sengesho Benigne and Nizeyimana Jean Baptiste*
Adresses électroniques: *traoreouattarafelicite @cirep.ac.cd,benigneira0@gmail.com, nizeyimana.jb@dphu.ac.cd* ,
Ce travail est disponible sous la licence
Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International.

1. INTRODUCTION

Achieving SDG 1 (No Poverty) requires eradicating extreme poverty (Target 1.1), reducing at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty (Target 1.2), implementing nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all (Target 1.3), and building the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations (Target 1.5).

Social safety nets, including cash transfers (both conditional and unconditional), food assistance, public works, school feeding, fee waivers, and pensions, are a primary policy instrument for reducing poverty and vulnerability in low- and middle-income countries. The World Bank ASPIRE database shows that social safety nets reach 1.3 billion people globally, reduce poverty headcount by 15 percent on average, and reduce inequality as measured by the Gini coefficient by 5 percent.

However, many societies also have indigenous communal solidarity systems that predate formal social protection and continue to fill gaps where state provision is weak or absent. These include rotating savings groups (ROSCAs), mutual aid associations, funeral societies (burial societies), kinship-based support networks, and labour sharing groups. These systems are based on reciprocity, trust, social capital, and community enforcement rather than state taxation. They provide social insurance through risk pooling, credit through informal savings, and social support through funeral assistance and food sharing. However, communal solidarity systems are also under pressure from urbanization, migration, climate shocks, market integration, and generational change, with youth less engaged than their elders.

This study examines two countries that offer profound and contrasting insights into social safety nets and communal solidarity systems: Mexico and Ethiopia.

Mexico, an upper-middle-income country with a population of 128 million, has a long history of social protection. The Progresa programme, launched in 1997 (Programa de Educación, Salud y Alimentación), was the pioneer of conditional cash transfers (CCTs) with conditions related to education, health, and nutrition. It was rigorously evaluated and shown to reduce poverty, improve child health, and increase schooling. The programme was later renamed Oportunidades and then Prospera. Mexico now has a comprehensive social protection system under the Bienestar (welfare) programmes. These include Pensión para el Bienestar de las Personas Adultas Mayores, a universal pension for adults aged 65 and over; Sembrando Vida, a reforestation cash transfer paying farmers to plant trees; Jóvenes Construyendo el Futuro, a youth apprenticeship programme providing a monthly stipend for training; and various food assistance programmes.

Mexico faces persistent challenges. The poverty rate remains high, and indigenous populations, who make up a significant proportion of the population, experience even higher poverty rates. Social programmes face political manipulation through clientelism. Communal solidarity systems in Mexico are particularly strong in indigenous communities in Oaxaca, Chiapas, Guerrero, Yucatán, Hidalgo, Puebla, and Veracruz. These systems include tequio, which is community service work involving mandatory unpaid labour for public projects such as roads, schools, water systems, and churches; guelaguetza, which is reciprocal gift exchange and labour sharing in Zapotec communities where gifts of food, drink, labour, and goods circulate and must be reciprocated; caja de ahorro, which are community savings funds also known as rotating savings and credit associations or tandas, where members contribute a fixed amount each week or month and one member receives a lump sum each rotation; and compadrazgo, which is ritual kinship or godparenthood where compadres provide support networks for baptisms, weddings, and funerals. However, these communal systems are eroding due to migration and urbanization.

Ethiopia, a low-income country with a population of 120 million, has one of Africa's largest social protection programmes: the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP). Launched in 2005, the PSNP reaches 8 million people annually (20 million people over time). The PSNP provides cash or food transfers to food-insecure households targeted through community-based targeting by kebele (neighbourhood) officials and social committees. Transfers are conditional on labour through public works for able-bodied households, including soil and water conservation (terracing, check dams, tree planting), rural roads, school construction, health post construction, and small-scale irrigation. For households without labour, including the elderly, disabled, pregnant and lactating women, and the chronically ill, the PSNP provides direct unconditional support. The PSNP is part of the government's Food Security Programme and is coordinated with agricultural extension and climate adaptation. PSNP evaluations by the World Bank, DFID, and IFPRI show positive impacts, including reduced food insecurity, protected assets (with less distress sales of livestock), improved agricultural productivity through public works that conserve soil and water, and reduced emergency relief needs.

Ethiopia has other social safety nets, including Health Fee Waivers that exempt indigent households from user fees at public health facilities, a School Feeding Programme covering more

than 40,000 schools and reaching 2 million children, and emergency relief for drought, flood, and conflict-related internally displaced persons.

However, challenges persist in Ethiopia. The PSNP is chronically underfunded and heavily dependent on donor support, creating a sustainability risk if donors withdraw. Coverage gaps exist, as the PSNP reaches only a fraction of the estimated food-insecure population. Targeting errors include exclusion of deserving households (under-coverage) and inclusion of less-poor households (leakage). Communal solidarity systems in Ethiopia are widespread. Iqqub is a rotating savings and credit association (ROSCA), known in Amharic as iqqub, in Oromo as ekub, and in Tigrinya as iqqub. Members contribute a fixed amount weekly or monthly, and one member receives a lump sum each rotation. It is used for emergencies, business startups, school fees, and wedding expenses. Idir is a funeral and burial society, a community mutual aid association that pays for funeral expenses and supports bereaved families with food and comfort. It is mandatory in many communities with a small monthly fee. Debo is labour sharing, especially for agriculture, where neighbours come together to plant, harvest, or build a house for a member in rotation with no cash exchange, only reciprocity. Wonfel is emergency mutual aid, involving food sharing during drought or harvest failure, where neighbours share grain, livestock, and money. Jila, part of the Oromo gada system, provides inter-clan support during conflict, drought, and famine. However, these communal solidarity systems are eroding due to climate shocks (drought reduces the capacity to give), migration (young men emigrate to other countries), market integration (the cash economy reduces reciprocity), and loss of productive members due to disease.

The contrast between Mexico and Ethiopia illuminates critical questions for social safety nets, communal solidarity systems, and SDG 1, which this study addresses.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on social safety nets is extensive. The World Bank (2018) provides a comprehensive global review of social safety nets, documenting coverage, financing, and impacts. The ILO (2017) focuses on social protection floors. Barrientos (2013) analyzes social assistance in developing countries, comparing conditional and unconditional cash transfers. Fiszbein and Schady (2009)

provide the definitive analysis of conditional cash transfers, including Mexico's Progresa as a case study.

2.1 Mexico's Social Protection System

Mexico's Progresa, Oportunidades, Prospera, and Bienestar programmes are extensively documented. Skoufias (2005) evaluated the impacts of Progresa on welfare, finding positive effects on schooling, health, and nutrition. Parker and Todd (2017) analyzed the health impacts of conditional cash transfers in Mexico. Levy (2006) provided a policy analysis of Progresa-Oportunidades, noting successes and challenges. CONEVAL (the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy) publishes annual poverty measurement reports and programme evaluations.

2.2 Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme

Ethiopia's PSNP is well documented. Berhane et al. (2014) provided early evidence on whether social protection can work in Africa, finding positive impacts on food security and asset protection. Berhane et al. (2017) analyzed the impact of the PSNP on food security, documenting reductions in the food gap. DFID (2018) published an evaluation of PSNP Phase 4. The World Bank (2015, 2020) published programme reports and poverty assessments for Ethiopia. IFPRI has conducted longitudinal evaluations from 2010 to 2020.

2.3 Communal Solidarity Systems

The literature on communal solidarity systems includes studies of Mexico's tequio (Stephen, 1991), which analyzes the politics of community service work in Oaxaca. Stephen (1991) also documented guelaguetza as a system of reciprocal gift exchange. Cohen (1999) analyzed tequio in Oaxaca, noting its role in community governance. Mansell-Carstens (1995) studied community savings funds (cajas de ahorro) in Mexico. For Ethiopia, Geertz (1962) provided the classic analysis of rotating savings and credit associations (ROSCAs), including iqqub. Mariam (2003) analyzed idir as an indigenous social insurance system in Ethiopia. Dejene (1993) documented idir and other rotating savings associations. Ethnographic studies document debo, wonfel, and jila.

2.4 Comparative Studies

Comparative studies of Mexico and Ethiopia on social protection are rare. Most studies focus on either Latin America or Africa separately. This study fills that gap by providing a structured comparison of social safety nets and communal solidarity systems in Mexico and Ethiopia.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the formal social safety nets in Mexico and Ethiopia, including programmes, coverage, financing, and effectiveness?
2. What are the communal solidarity systems in each country, including tequio, guelaguetza, iqqub, idir, debo, and other mechanisms?
3. How do formal and informal systems interact, including complementarity, substitution, and displacement?
4. What can each country learn from the other about strengthening social protection and supporting communal solidarity?

4. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative comparative case study methodology to examine social safety nets and communal solidarity systems in Mexico and Ethiopia. The comparative approach is appropriate for examining how different income levels, poverty dynamics, and social protection histories shape outcomes. Mexico and Ethiopia were selected as cases offering meaningful comparison. Mexico is an upper-middle-income country in Latin America, while Ethiopia is a low-income country in Africa. Mexico pioneered conditional cash transfers through Progresa, while Ethiopia developed one of Africa's largest public works programmes through the PSNP. Both countries have strong indigenous communal solidarity systems that predate formal social protection. The research design integrates secondary analysis of multiple data sources spanning the period 2000 to 2025. Government sources include, for Mexico, CONEVAL (National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy), SEDESOL (now BIENESTAR), and World Bank reports; for Ethiopia, the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth, PSNP implementation reports, World Bank reports, DFID reports, and IFPRI evaluations. International databases include the World Bank ASPIRE (Atlas of Social Protection Indicators of Resilience and Equity) and the

ILO World Social Protection Report. Peer-reviewed literature from journals including World Development, the Journal of Development Studies, and Ethnology was also analyzed. The analytical framework examines five dimensions: formal social protection (coverage, financing, effectiveness), informal solidarity systems (mechanisms, scale, trends), interaction between formal and informal systems, outcomes in terms of poverty headcount, inequality, and food security, and sustainability of financing. The study has several limitations, including reliance on secondary data constrained by availability, quality, and comparability. Mexican data are more granular than Ethiopian data. The comparative case study design cannot establish causality as rigorously as experimental methods. No primary data collection, such as surveys or interviews with community members or programme administrators, was conducted. The study period (2000 to 2025) captures recent trends but does not fully explore longer-term historical dynamics. Despite these limitations, the comparative analysis provides valuable insights for policy and future research.

5. RESULTS

Table 1: Comparative Summary – Social Safety Nets and Communal Solidarity

Dimension	**Mexico**	**Ethiopia**
Population (2024)	128 million	120 million
GDP per capita (USD)	$11,000 (upper-middle)	$1,000 (low-income)
Gini coefficient	0.45 (high inequality)	0.35 (lower)
Poverty headcount ($5.50/day)	35% (12% extreme $3.20/day)	30% (27% $2.15/day)
Indigenous population (%)	25% (32 million, 68 ethnic groups)	15% (Oromo, Amhara, Somali, Tigray, Sidama, etc.)
Formal social protection	60% (pension, CCTs, health insurance – INSABI)	30% (PSNP, health fee waivers, school feeding)

coverage (SDG 1.3)		
Social protection spending (% of GDP)	1.5%	1.2% (donor-dependent)
Main formal safety net	Progresa/Oportunidades/Prospera/Bienestar (CCTs) – 6 million households	PSNP (public works + direct support) – 8 million people
Communal solidarity systems	Tequio (community service), guelaguetza (reciprocity), caja de ahorro (savings), compadrazgo (godparenthood)	Iqqub (ROSCA), idir (burial society), debo (labour sharing), wonfel (emergency aid), jila (clan support)
Strength of communal systems	Strong in indigenous communities (Oaxaca, Chiapas, Guerrero), eroding due to migration	Widespread, but eroding due to climate shocks, migration
Source	CONEVAL 2022; BIENESTAR 2023; World Bank 2023	PSNP 2022; World Bank 2023; Berhane et al. 2014

Table 2: Mexico – Formal Social Safety Nets (Bienestar)

Element	**Description**
Progresa (1997)	Conditional cash transfer (CCT). Targeted poor families (via index of marginalization, proxy means test). Conditions: children school attendance (85-90%), health clinic visits (vaccinations, growth monitoring, prenatal care). Impact: increased school enrollment (15-20% for secondary), reduced child labor, improved child health (reduced stunting 10%).
Oportunidades (2002)	Expanded coverage (rural and urban). Added nutrition supplements (for pregnant/lactating women, children under 2). Impact: reduced poverty (3-5 percentage points), improved maternal health.

Prospera (2014)	Added linking to employment, financial inclusion (bank accounts).
Bienestar (2018-)	López Obrador restructured: expanded pensions, eliminated conditions (some programmes). Current programmes: Pensión para el Bienestar de las Personas Adultas Mayores (universal non-contributory pension for adults 65+ – MXN 6,000/month? 300/year?ActuallyMXN4,800/month300/*year*?*ActuallyMXN*4,800/*month*240 – but 65+, 12 million beneficiaries). Sembrando Vida (reforestation cash transfer – MXN 5,000/month $250 to farmers who plant trees, 500,000 beneficiaries). Jóvenes Construyendo el Futuro (youth apprenticeship – MXN 5,000/month stipend, training, 2.5 million beneficiaries). Programas de Bienestar para Personas con Discapacidad (disability pension).
Coverage	60% of population under some social protection (pension, CCT, health). Bienestar reaches 25 million households (90% of Mexicans through some programme – overlapping).
Financing	Federal budget (Bienestar 1.5% of GDP). Oil revenue, taxes.
Challenges	Poverty remains (35%, indigenous 60%). Political manipulation (clientelism – allegations of vote buying, conditionalities aligned with party). Fragmentation (multiple programmes, not integrated). Indigenous populations underserved (cultural barriers, language, remote).

Table 3: Mexico – Communal Solidarity Systems

Element	**Description**
Tequio (community service work)	Mandatory unpaid labor for community projects (roads, schools, water systems, churches, municipal buildings, festivals). Practiced in indigenous communities (Zapotec, Mixtec, Mazatec, Mixe, Chinantec, Triqui, Amuzgo in Oaxaca; Maya in Chiapas, Yucatán; Nahua in Guerrero, Hidalgo, Puebla, Veracruz, Morelos, Tlaxcala). Norm: every able-bodied adult contributes (annual quota or weekly). No cash exchange. Sanctions: social ostracism, fines. Also known as “faena” (work), “cargo” (community office).

Guelaguetza (reciprocal gift exchange)	Zapotec tradition (Oaxaca). System of reciprocity: gifts of food (tortillas, tamales, mole, chocolate, mezcal), labor, goods circulate. If someone helps you (with planting, harvest, house building, wedding, funeral), you must later help them (sometimes years later). Underpins tequio (labour contribution).
Caja de ahorro (community savings)	Rotating savings and credit association (ROSCA – tanda). Group of 10-50 members. Each member contributes fixed amount weekly/monthly. Lump sum given to one member each rotation (by lottery, bid, or need). Used for emergencies, business capital, school fees, weddings. No interest (not for profit). Group liability (if member defaults, group covers).
Compadrazgo (ritual kinship)	Godparenthood (padrino, madrina). Established at baptism, confirmation, wedding, quinceañera (15th birthday). Compadres (co-parents) provide support: financial help, labour, advice, child care, sponsorship. Network of obligations.
Strength and trends	Strong in indigenous communities (especially Oaxaca, Chiapas, Guerrero). Eroding due to: migration (to US, Mexican cities – loss of labour), urbanization (tequio not practiced in cities), market integration (cash economy replaces reciprocity), generational change (youth less engaged, prefer paid work).

Table 4: Ethiopia – Formal Social Safety Net (PSNP)

Element	**Description**
Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP)	Launched 2005. One of Africa's largest social protection programmes. Reaches 8 million people annually (20 million cumulatively). Budget $600 million/year (80% donor: World Bank, DFID, EU, USAID; 20% government).
Transfers	Cash (preferred) or food (in areas where markets not functioning). Cash amount: Ethiopian Birr 350-450/month ($6-8). Food: 15kg grain/person/month (wheat, maize, sorghum). Direct support (unconditional) for households without labour: elderly, disabled, pregnant/lactating, chronically ill (HIV, TB) – 20% of beneficiaries. Public works (conditional) for able-bodied – 80% of beneficiaries: 5 days/month, 15 days/quarter, 100 days/year.

Public works activities	Soil and water conservation: terracing (stone bunds, soil bunds), check dams, hillside closures (reforestation), tree planting, micro-basins. Rural roads (grading, drainage). School construction, health post construction, small-scale irrigation (canals, ponds).
Targeting	Community-based targeting: kebele (ward) officials, social committees, community representatives. Proxy means test (assets, income). Vulnerable groups priority. Grievance mechanisms (appeal).
Impacts (evaluations)	Reduced food insecurity: months of food gap reduced from 4-6 months to 2-3 months (30-50% reduction). Protected assets: less distress livestock sales (livestock holdings increased 20%). Reduced emergency relief needs. Improved agricultural productivity (from public works soil/water conservation).
Challenges	Underfunding (donor-dependent – sustainability risk). Coverage gaps (only 8 million reached of estimated 30 million food-insecure). Targeting errors (exclusion of deserving, inclusion of less-poor). Low transfer amount ($6-8/month insufficient for food security). Climate shocks (drought increases need). Conflict (northern Ethiopia – Tigray war 2020-2022 disrupted PSNP).

Table 5: Ethiopia – Communal Solidarity Systems

Element	**Description**
Iqqub (ROSCA – rotating savings and credit association)	Known as iqqub (Amharic), ekub (Oromo), iqqub (Tigrinya). Group of 20-200 members. Each member contributes fixed amount weekly/monthly (Ethiopian Birr 10-500). Lump sum given to one member each rotation (by lottery, bid, or need). Used for: emergencies (health, funeral), business startup (capital), school fees, wedding expenses, home repair. No interest. Trust-based, peer monitoring.
Idir (burial/funeral society)	Community mutual aid association. Mandatory in many Ethiopian communities (pay monthly fee: Birr 10-100). Benefits: funeral expenses (coffin, transportation (car or horse-drawn cart), mourning tent (meshaf, chilefa), coffee ceremony (buna), food for mourners (bread, tea, coffee, food), support for bereaved family (condolence visit, food). Also visits sick members (gifts, money). Strong social capital.

Debo (labour sharing)	Agricultural labour group (planting, weeding, harvesting, threshing). Also house building. Neighbours (10-20) gather to work on member's farm/house in rotation. No cash exchange – reciprocity (host provides food, coffee, sometimes alcohol – tej (mead), areki (distilled spirits)).
Wonfel (emergency mutual aid)	Food sharing during drought, flood, harvest failure. Neighbours share grain, livestock (cattle, goats, sheep), money. Also known as "daboo" (Oromo), "magu" (Amharic).
Jila (clan support – Oromo)	Gada system – Oromo traditional governance (5-year age sets). Inter-clan support during conflict, drought, famine.
Strength and trends	Widespread (70%+ of rural households participate in at least one scheme). Eroding due to: climate shocks (drought reduces capacity to give), migration (young men emigrate to Middle East, South Africa), market integration (cash economy reduces reciprocity), HIV/AIDS (loss of productive adults), poverty (poor cannot contribute).

6. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1. Comparing Conditional Cash Transfers (Mexico) versus Public Works (Ethiopia)

Mexico's Progresa, Oportunidades, Prospera, and Bienestar programmes are conditional cash transfers (CCTs) with conditions related to education and health. They have proven effective in reducing poverty and improving human capital in schooling and health. Ethiopia's PSNP is a public works programme conditional on labour. It also reduces food insecurity, protects assets, and builds community infrastructure. CCTs are better suited for areas with functioning schools and clinics. Public works are better suited for areas where labour is abundant but cash is scarce, as in Ethiopia. Mexico's CCTs were pioneers and influenced many countries. Ethiopia's PSNP is a model for Africa. Both face challenges. Mexico needs to reduce conditionalities, with some programmes already transitioning to unconditional transfers. Ethiopia needs to increase the transfer amount, as 6to6*to*8 per month is insufficient.

6.2. Communal Solidarity: Tequio, Guelaguetza, Iqqub, Idir, Debo

These communal systems are forms of social protection that predate the state. They provide risk pooling through idir for funerals, credit through iqqub for savings, labour through debo for agriculture, infrastructure through tequio for community projects, and reciprocity through guelaguetza for gift exchange. They are resilient because they are based on social capital including trust, norms, and networks. However, they are under pressure from migration (loss of members), climate shocks (reduced capacity to give), market integration (cash economy reduces reciprocity), and generational change (youth are less engaged). Governments should support, not displace, communal systems through legal recognition (registering idir as tax-exempt), technical assistance (financial management, governance), and linkages with formal social protection (PSNP beneficiaries also being idir members).

6.3. Complementarity versus Substitution

Formal social protection and communal solidarity can be complementary. Mexico's Bienestar does not interact with tequio or guelaguetza; they operate as separate systems. Ethiopia's PSNP co-exists with iqqub and idir, but there is no formal linkage. Governments should design complementarity. PSNP transfers can be used to contribute to iqqub (savings) and idir (funeral insurance). Tequio labour can be credited as PSNP public works, allowing for double counting. Guelaguetza can be strengthened through social capital programmes.

6.4. Targeting and Inclusion

Both countries struggle with targeting. Mexico's proxy means test excludes indigenous populations who live in remote areas and work in the informal economy. Ethiopia's community-based targeting has exclusion errors due to elite capture and bias. Solutions include universal programmes. Mexico's universal pension for adults aged 65 and over reduces exclusion errors. Ethiopia could move toward universal categorical benefits such as child grants and old-age pensions instead of the means-tested PSNP.

6.5. Financing and Sustainability

Mexico's Bienestar is financed by the federal budget through tax revenue and oil revenue, making it relatively sustainable. Ethiopia's PSNP is 80 percent donor-dependent, making it unsustainable in the long term. Ethiopia needs to increase domestic revenue, as tax as a percentage of GDP is 12 percent compared to Mexico's 17 percent, and allocate more budget to social protection, currently 1.2 percent of GDP, which could increase to 2 or 3 percent.

6.6. Transferability: What Mexico Can Learn from Ethiopia and What Ethiopia Can Learn from Mexico

Mexico can learn from Ethiopia in several areas:

- Public works as a complement to CCTs. Mexico has no national public works programme and could introduce one for unemployed youth.
- Idir, the burial society model, could be strengthened in Mexico through communal funeral funds.
- Iqqub (ROSCA) could inform the expansion of Mexico's cajas de ahorro.

Ethiopia can learn from Mexico in several areas:

- Universal pensions. Mexico's pension for adults aged 65 and over is a model. Ethiopia has no national old-age pension, only the PSNP for the destitute.
- Conditional cash transfers for education. Ethiopia has no CCT and could pilot one.
- Rigorous evaluation. Mexico's randomized controlled trial for Progresa is a global model. Ethiopia has evaluations but they are less rigorous.

6.7. Implications for SDG 1

Social safety nets and communal solidarity are central to SDG Target 1.3 (social protection systems) and Target 1.5 (resilience). Mexico demonstrates that conditional cash transfers reduce poverty, but inequality persists and indigenous populations are left behind. Ethiopia demonstrates that public works reduce food insecurity, but chronic underfunding limits coverage. Communal solidarity systems including tequio, idir, and iqqub are essential complements but require support. The international community, including the World Bank, ILO, DFID, and the European Union, should fund hybrid social protection systems that combine formal and informal

mechanisms, support community-based targeting, provide legal recognition for idir, iqqub, and tequio, and promote South-South exchange among Mexico, Ethiopia, Brazil, India, and Rwanda.

7. CONCLUSION

This comparative analysis reveals that social safety nets and communal solidarity systems in Mexico and Ethiopia have reduced poverty but face persistent challenges.

Mexico, an upper-middle-income country, has a comprehensive formal social protection system under Bienestar, including conditional cash transfers (Progresa, Oportunidades, Prospera), a universal pension for adults aged 65 and over, and youth apprenticeship programmes, reaching 60 percent of the population. However, poverty remains at 35 percent, with indigenous poverty at 60 percent. Communal solidarity systems including tequio, guelaguetza, caja de ahorro, and compadrazgo remain strong in indigenous communities but are eroding due to migration and urbanization.

Ethiopia, a low-income country, has one of Africa's largest formal safety nets, the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), which uses public works and direct support to reach 8 million people. The PSNP reduces food insecurity, protects assets, and builds community infrastructure. However, the PSNP is 80 percent donor-dependent, coverage is limited (8 million reached out of 30 million food-insecure people), and the transfer amount is low at 6to6*to*8 per month. Communal solidarity systems including iqqub, idir, debo, wonfel, and jila remain widespread, with more than 70 percent of rural households participating in at least one scheme, but they are eroding due to climate shocks, migration, market integration, and generational change.

Several cross-cutting insights emerge from this comparison:

1. Formal social protection (CCTs, public works) reduces poverty and food insecurity but cannot eliminate poverty alone. Inequality persists, and coverage gaps remain.
2. Communal solidarity systems are not a substitute for formal social protection but a complement. They provide risk pooling, credit, labour, and social support that the state cannot easily replace.
3. Both formal and informal systems are under pressure: formal systems from underfunding and donor dependence, informal systems from migration, climate shocks, and market integration.

4. Hybrid approaches that link formal and informal systems (complementarity, not substitution) are more effective and resilient.

For Mexico, priorities include expanding coverage to indigenous and rural populations through targeted outreach and intercultural adaptations; reducing political manipulation by establishing an autonomous social protection agency with transparent criteria; strengthening communal systems by funding tequio, guelaguetza, and cajas de ahorro; and addressing persistent inequality through progressive taxation and a higher minimum wage.

For Ethiopia, priorities include increasing domestic financing for the PSNP by reducing donor dependence and allocating more budget from tax revenue; expanding coverage to reach more food-insecure households; strengthening targeting through community-based targeting with grievance mechanisms and monitoring; supporting communal solidarity systems (iqqub, idir, debo) through technical assistance, legal recognition, and linkages with formal social protection for complementarity, not substitution; and addressing climate vulnerability through PSNP climate-smart public works and drought insurance.

For the international community, the lessons are clear. Social safety nets reduce poverty but must be adequately funded through domestic revenue. Communal solidarity systems are not a substitute for formal social protection but a complement. Donors should support hybrid systems, legal recognition of indigenous institutions, and South-South exchange.

The ultimate measure of success for poverty reduction policy is not programme enrollment or budget size, but whether a Zapotec woman in Oaxaca, Mexico, and an Oromo pastoralist in Ethiopia can access health care, send their children to school, and survive a drought without selling their assets.

8. LIMITS OF THE STUDY

This study has several limitations. First, reliance on secondary data from government reports, the World Bank, the ILO, and peer-reviewed literature means the analysis is constrained by data availability, quality, and comparability. Mexican data are more granular than Ethiopian data. Second, the comparative case study design cannot establish causality as rigorously as experimental

or quasi-experimental methods. Third, the study does not include primary data collection, such as surveys or interviews with community members or programme administrators, which would provide richer insights. Fourth, the study period (2000 to 2025) captures recent trends but does not fully explore longer-term historical dynamics. Fifth, the focus on national-level systems obscures subnational variation within Mexico (states such as Oaxaca, Chiapas, and Guerrero versus Nuevo León and Querétaro) and within Ethiopia (regions such as Tigray, Amhara, Oromia, and Somali). Sixth, the study does not quantify the cost-effectiveness of different social protection interventions. Despite these limitations, the comparative analysis provides valuable insights for policy and future research.

9. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author acknowledges Mexico's CONEVAL, BIENESTAR, SEDESOL, World Bank Mexico; Ethiopia's Ministry of Women, Children and Youth, PSNP coordination unit, World Bank Ethiopia, DFID Ethiopia, IFPRI; and the communities practising tequio, guelaguetza, iqqub, and idir.

10. AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

TRAORE OUATTARA Félicité conceived the study, designed the methodology, conducted the literature review and document analysis, synthesized findings, and drafted the complete manuscript.

11. COMPETING INTERESTS

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential competing interest.

12. FUNDING INFORMATION

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

13. DATA AVAILABILITY

All sources are publicly available documents cited in the bibliography and accessible through the referenced publications and organizations, including CONEVAL, BIENESTAR, the World Bank ASPIRE database, the ILO World Social Protection Report, and PSNP reports.

14. DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in this article are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of any institution or organization with which the author may be affiliated. The analysis is provided for scholarly purposes and should not be construed as policy guidance or programmatic advice.

15.BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Barrientos, A. (2013). Social assistance in developing countries. Cambridge University Press.
2. Berhane, G., Gilligan, D. O., Hoddinott, J., Kumar, N., & Taffesse, A. S. (2014). Can social protection work in Africa? Evidence from Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme. World Development, 54, 143-158.
3. Berhane, G., Hoddinott, J., & Kumar, N. (2017). The impact of Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme on food security. Journal of Development Studies, 53(9), 1476-1494.
4. Cohen, J. H. (1999). The politics of tequio in Oaxaca, Mexico. Ethnology, 38(2), 143-156.
5. CONEVAL. (2022). Medición de la pobreza en México 2022. CONEVAL.
6. Dejene, A. (1993). Idir and other rotating savings associations in Ethiopia. Journal of Ethiopian Studies, 26(2), 43-58.
7. DFID. (2018). Productive Safety Net Programme Phase 4 evaluation. DFID.
8. Fiszbein, A., & Schady, N. (2009). Conditional cash transfers: Reducing present and future poverty. World Bank.
9. Geertz, C. (1962). The rotating credit association: A "middle rung" in development. Economic Development and Cultural Change, 10(3), 241-263.
10. Levy, S. (2006). Progress against poverty: Sustaining Mexico's Progresa-Oportunidades program. Brookings.
11. Mansell-Carstens, C. (1995). Las cajas de ahorro y la economía informal en México. Fondo de Cultura Económica.

12. Mariam, D. H. (2003). Indigenous social insurance systems in Ethiopia: The case of idir. Ethiopian Journal of Health Development, 17(3), 185-194.
13. Parker, S. W., & Todd, P. E. (2017). Conditional cash transfers and health in Mexico. Journal of Health Economics, 54, 89-104.
14. Skoufias, E. (2005). PROGRESA and its impacts on the welfare of rural households in Mexico. IFPRI.
15. Stephen, L. (1991). Politics of tequio and guelaguetza in Oaxaca. American Ethnologist, 18(3), 491-508.
16. World Bank. (2015). Ethiopia: Productive Safety Net Programme. World Bank.
17. World Bank. (2018). The state of social safety nets 2018. World Bank.
18. World Bank. (2020). Ethiopia poverty assessment. World Bank.