# Tingathe Economic Empowerment Pilot Project and Social Cohesion in Malawi
## Qualitative survey

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# Background

- We had the chance to study the impacts of an **Economic Empowerment Project** on **horizontal/vertical trust** that operates on the top of the country-wide **social cash transfer program (SCTP)**.

- In 2015 GIZ-Malawi designed in cooperation with the Malawian government the **Tingathe Economic Empowerment Project (EEP)** in the (rural) district of Mwanza.

- It targets the **same beneficiaries of the social cash transfer program** (**ultra-poor and labor-constrained** HHs) and has the objective of **graduating beneficiaries out of poverty.** It was implemented in **2016.**

- Social cash transfer beneficiaries from **6 randomly selected village clusters** (out of the 20 existing) in Mwanza district benefited from the EEP project (**600 households**):

  - ❖ 2 Clusters received the **lump-sum transfer** (50,000 MWK (70$))
  - ❖ 2 Clusters received financial and business **training**
  - ❖ 2 Clusters received training **AND** the lump-sum transfer

# Background
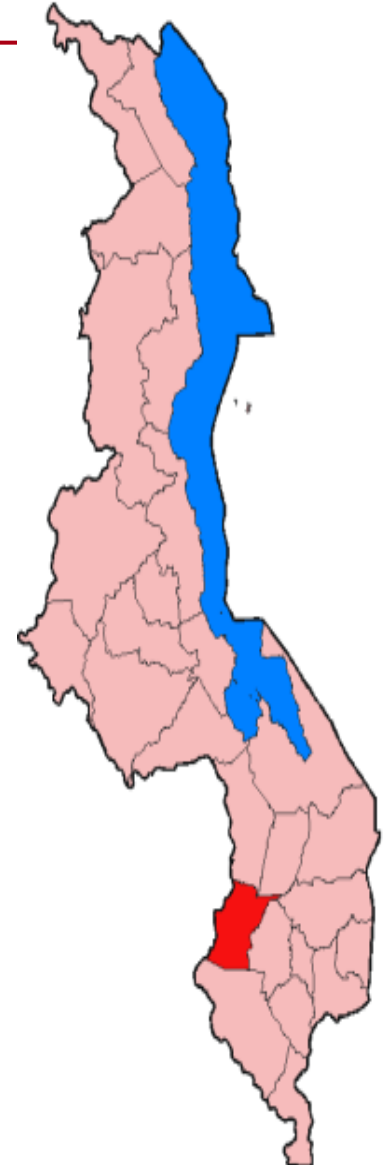
- **Social protection** is viewed as a **crucial policy** to promote **social justice**, of which **social cohesion** and **inclusion** are an **integral part** (Devereux, McGregor, and Sabates-Wheeler, 2011).

- Participation in social protection can **instil** a sense of **dignity, foster participation** and **integration** into the **community** and strengthen **community support mechanisms** (Leites et al., 2017)

  ➢ **Positive effects** on **horizontal cooperation** and **trust** (Ecuador: Valli, Peterman and Hidrobo, 2018; Colombia: Attanasio, Polania-Reyes, and Pellerano, 2015; Tanzania: Evans, Holtemeyer, and Kosec, 2018)

  ➢ **Positive effect** on **state identity:** the underlying hypothesis is that the state is responsible for the programme and citizens are aware of that (opposite effect if donor driven?)

# DIE concept of social cohesion

| DIMENSIONS | ATTRIBUTES | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Trust** | **Inclusive identity** | **Cooperation for common good** |
| Between state and individual (vertical) | Political trust | National identity | State - society cooperation |
| Between individual and groups (horizontal) | Social trust | Group identity | Intergroup cooperation |

# The qualitative survey should address the following questions/topics

- Do people by now know very well the mechanisms of the saving group?

- For what purpose did the members of the groups use loans?

- How many members were unable to repay the loans?

- Why did some members did not repay the loan?

- Did the use of loans translate in new economic activities and livelihood improvements?

- Did group members establish new personal contacts due to the group membership?

- Has access to the savings groups affected trust among members? In which way?

- Have there been any conflicts/issues between the group members?

- What kind of group businesses have been started and how have they evolved over time?

- Who participates in group business (gender ratio, ethnic diversity)? Were local political institutions involved or self-organized?

- Has participating in saving groups somehow affected the view of and trust towards local and national institutions?

# Activity 1 – Group discussion (about 40 min)

This will be a group discussion guided by the direct questions of the researcher.

- Who knows well the mechanisms of the saving group? Can you explain?

- For what purpose did the members of the groups use loans?

- Were there members unable to repay the loans?

- Did the use of loans translate in new economic activities and livelihood improvements?

- Did group members establish new personal contacts due to the group membership?

- Have there been any conflicts/issues between the group members?

- Did any group business start thanks to the saving group?

  - What kind of group businesses have been started and how have they evolved over time?

  - Who participates in group business (gender ratio, ethnic diversity)?

  - Were local political institutions involved or self-organized?

# Activity 2 – Card game (about 40 min)

Card game is a **participatory technique** based on the premise that local inhabitants possess expert knowledge of their local environments, as every participatory game. In the empirical literature on the capability approach, the card game has been **used to assess people's capabilities and agency** (see Frediani, 2007 and Frediani et al. 2008).

This method will involve a number of cards, previously designed according to the questions/issues we want to answer. **Every card can represent people, places, activities, assets and feelings familiar to local people and that can give the idea of the level of cohesion reached by the group.**
This game can lead to a deliberative debate, with participants expressing their opinions, and even dissenting with each other. This process allows participants to think about their dimensions of well-being, the barriers they face and their historical background that has led to their current situation.

This game represents a socially or culturally distinct understanding of landscape and shed some light on points that may have been missed in the single interview, allowing the participation of the whole group. Moreover, it will show how is the dynamic inside of the group.
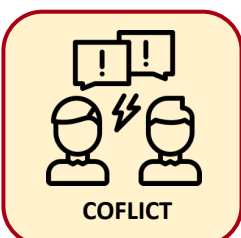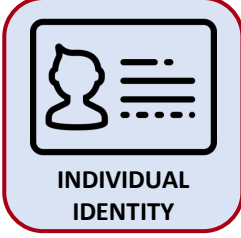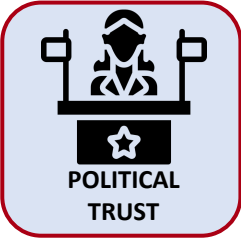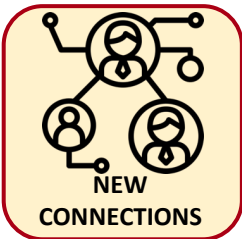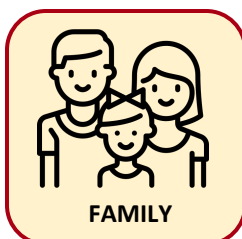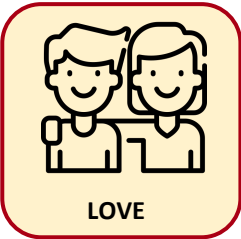
# The board

The cards will have to be discussed by the members and than put on a leveled (from 1 to 10) board according to their perception of the **degree the problem/issue is present in their life**.

This **double methodology** connects a participatory and qualitative activity with some quantitative values. We will be able to analyze the **dynamic of the group** during their discussion and we will have **a commonly chosen value for each problem/issue**.

Such exercises not only provided invaluable data from each group but **allow for some cross-comparisons between groups**. Each discussion session has its own dynamic and direction - when it comes to analysis it is extremely useful to have a common external reference point such as that provided by the card game (Khan and Manderson 1992).

# The cards



LOVE · FRIENDSHIP · BUSINESS · INSTITUTIONS · RISK · SAVINGS · COMMUNITY · FAMILY

FAILURE · EXCLUSION · NEW CONNECTIONS · TRUST · EMPLOYMENT · ASSETS · EDUCATION · NATION

POLITICAL TRUST · INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY · INTERGROUP COLLABORATION · JUSTICE · PEACE · COFLICT · FREEDOM · HEALTH

LIVESTOCK · TAXES

Business  Feelings  Institutions

# Activity 3 – Personal interview (about 20 min)

This will be a one to one interview focusing on particular cases selected from the available data. The questions are intended to go deeper into the specific case.

- For what purpose did you use the loan?

- Where you able to repay the loan easily?

    - Which were the difficulties in repaying the loan?

- Did the use of the loan translate in new economic activities and livelihood improvements?

- Did group members establish new personal contacts due to the group membership?

- Have there been any conflicts/issues between the group members?

- Did you join any group business?

    - What kind of group businesses?

    - Who participates in group business (gender ratio, ethnic diversity)?

    - Were local political institutions involved or self-organized?

- What are your feelings toward your country/politics?

# Prospect timeframe of the activities

20 + 10 min – Arrival, presentation, introduction and cheering
40 + 20 min – Activity 1: Group discussion
10 + 5 min – Explanation of the Card game
40 + 20 min – Activity 2: Card game
10 + 5 min – Final thanks
20 + 10 min – Individual interview 1
20 + 10 min – Individual interview 2
20 + 10 min – Individual interview 3

**Total 4 hours and 30 minutes**

The additional time is due to translation reasons

# Final timeframe of the activities

15 min – Arrival, presentation, introduction and cheering

30 min – Activity 1: Group discussion

5 min – Explanation of the Card game

30 min – Activity 2: Card game

5 min – Final thanks

20 min – Individual interview 1

20 min – Individual interview 2

20 min – Individual interview 3

**Total 2 hours and 25 minutes**

Translator instructed as facilitator

# Results

Exogenous causes, such as disruptive atmospheric events and their economic implications, deforestation, SCT suspension, discrimination toward SCT beneficiaries, literacy rate, and environmental conditions (at cluster level), inevitably test the resilience of these people that are already considered the poorest of the poor.

In the year 2017, the bad rainy season in coincidence with the suspension of two SCT installments were, as claimed by the same members of the VSLs, the reason for which three groups ceased their activities. Additionally, we could also speculate on the fact that four of the five conflicts reported arose between 2017 and 2018.



Endogenous factors of course are still important. They are mainly internal conflicts between members of the VSLs. Some of the causes can be referred to the VSL design. By including more than one village into the same VSL, the same is exposed to simple logistic problems that are exacerbated by classical inter village dynamics – in which village to store the money, or lower meeting frequency, attendance, and/or higher costs due to the distance between villages, etc. –. These reasons tend to increase the tension within the groups and lead to stealing accusation of any kind. However, illicit action might happen, and happened indeed

# Results



Where the conflicts were not caused by illicit actions and the VSL successfully overcame the climatic and economic struggles experienced in 2017, **trust among the group members increased**. Group identity is strong, reinforced by the proudness of having received an **exclusive training**, but also influenced by their shared struggles, experiences as a group, and a common "language" learned during the training (Kilpatrick et al., 1999). The members of the VSLs performing better and see themselves in a **path of "graduation"** toward independency.

The trust that VSL members feel towards other members of the villages (*horizontal trust*) is very low. This is, however, not directly related to the EEP or the COMSIP VSL group, but to the fact that all the SCT beneficiaries (and so, also EEP beneficiaries) have been discriminated since the beginning of the SCT program in 2014. As community chiefs and local institutions (VDC and AEC) were reported to exclude SCT beneficiaries from other interventions run by the government or donors, VSL members reported also high distrust towards these institutions (*vertical trust*).

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