Shock Responsive Social Protection

Piloting the Social Registry for Early Recovery Food Security Targeting in Luang Namtha Province

WFP World Food Programme

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1 Executive Summary

This report presents the results of a pilot targeting exercise conducted in Luang Namtha Province, Lao PDR, aimed at assessing the feasibility of using the national social registry as a foundation for early recovery food security targeting following severe floods in September 2024. Supported by the Government of France and in partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MLSW) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), the World Food Programme (WFP) tested an adapted approach that integrated social registry data, food security indicators, and community consultations to identify households for cash-based recovery assistance. The social registry, originally designed for poverty targeting using a Proxy Means Test (PMT), provided a critical starting point. However, recognizing the conceptual differences between poverty and food insecurity, WFP introduced a layered methodology:

- Step 1: Development of food security criteria using WFP's quarterly phone-based food security monitoring mVAM data and alignment with registry variables;
- Step 2: Field visits to a 10% sample of households to test relationships between food security indicators and PMT scores;
- Step 3: Community consultation via Village Disaster Management Committees (VDMCs) to validate eligibility, add excluded households, and refine the beneficiary list.

The analysis showed that using the PMT70 threshold offered the best balance of accuracy and coverage when identifying vulnerable households. However, PMT scores alone were insufficient. Community consultations and qualitative insights were essential to correct for gaps and ensure social legitimacy of the targeting process.

The pilot reached 638 households with cash assistance in February 2025. Post-distribution monitoring highlighted strong perceptions of fairness (90%) but also revealed ongoing challenges with redistribution and community acceptance of household targeting — reinforcing the need for stronger sensitization and feedback mechanisms.

Key recommendations from the exercise include:

- Adopt PMT70 as a starting point for targeting, with refinement through food security indicators and community validation;
- Improve operational processes, including the accuracy of household data, integration of unique identifiers, and regular updates to reflect dynamic vulnerability;
- Establish a formal data-sharing agreement with MAF to enable timely and secure access to the full social registry dataset;
- Strengthen redress mechanisms beyond the Complaints and Feedback Mechanism (CFM) by integrating government-led grievance structures and village-level appeal processes;

- Incorporate additional variables in future registry updates that better capture food security, coping capacity, and recent shocks;
- Leverage upcoming research, particularly the 2025 Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA), to validate and improve the alignment between registry data and real-time food security conditions.

The findings confirm that with targeted adaptations, community engagement, and stronger coordination with government systems, the national social registry can serve as an effective platform for shock-responsive assistance — bridging short-term humanitarian needs with longer-term social protection goals.

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2 Context

In September 2024, heavy rains linked to Typhoon Yagi resulted in devastating floods in Northern Laos. In Luang Namtha province, over 40,000 people were affected. Thousands of homes were damaged, and floods caused widespread crop and livestock losses. Two districts of Luang Namtha province were heavily affected by the floods: Nalae and Namtha. According to World Bank analysis, both had low pre-floods poverty rates: 5.15% in Nalae, and 4.91% in Namtha.[1]

The Lao PDR social registry is managed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. It was designed with technical support from the World Bank, who used data from the Laos Expenditure and Consumption Survey in 2018 to design a Proxy Means Testing (PMT) formula. The PMT is a statistical tool that determines a household's economic condition (or welfare) based on observable socio-demographic characteristics such as household composition, assets, housing conditions and tenure, education, and access to basic services. The 60th percentile is used as the national cut off for poverty, set at LAK556,669 in 2022.

Upon request from the government, WFP immediately responded with in-kind food assistance to 14,240 (6,938 women) people across 20 villages of Nalae and Namtha Districts. In consultation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, WFP then designed an early recovery cash intervention, with household targeting based on the Poverty Graduation and Development Database, often referred to as the national social registry. The choice to use the social registry for early recovery assistance aimed to feed into broader discussions around Shock Responsive Social Protection (SRSP) in Laos. WFP designed the targeting with multiple steps, to allow for rigorous measurement and lessons learned, and to mitigate potential community tension related to targeting. The ultimate objective is to assess whether the social registry is an appropriate basis for future targeting and, if so, how it should be used. Targeting approaches will depend on the specific objectives of interventions—some may aim to achieve food security and nutrition (FSN) goals, while others may focus on addressing essential needs, such as through multi-purpose cash assistance.

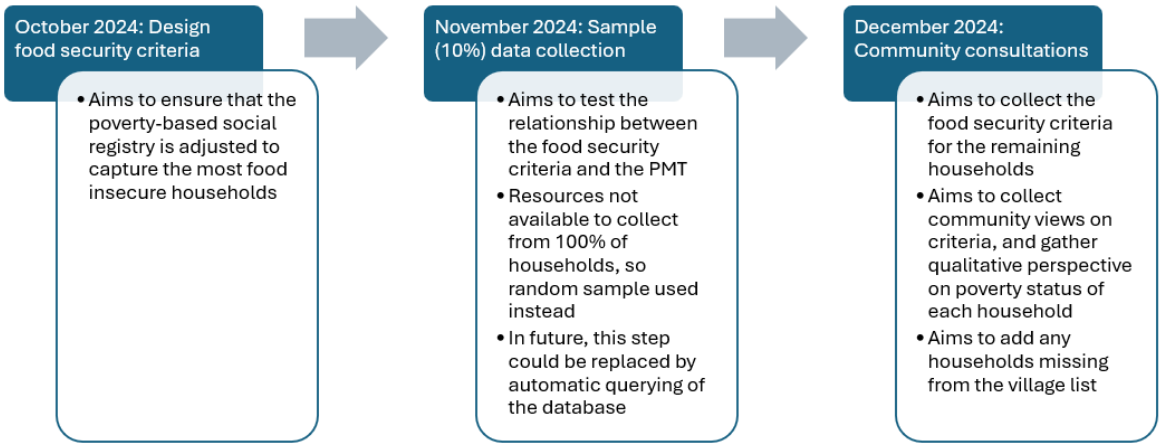
The targeting process was designed to start with the national social registry. Rather than simply assisting all households classified as poor in the social registry, WFP designed a targeting

[1] World Bank. Where are the Poor in Lao PDR? Small Area Estimation: Province and District Level Results. February 2023.

process to adapt the registry for early recovery targeting. This process is intended to address three core issues:

1. **Conceptual differences:** WFP aims to assist food insecure households, while the social registry assesses poverty. Food insecurity is not always the same as poverty; some poor households may not be food insecure; some food insecure households may not be poor. WFP sees food insecurity (and poverty and vulnerability) as shaped by a mix of dynamic economic, social, environmental and structural factors that can be compounded by covariate shocks. This is quite different from the more static and mostly economic view used in many social registries in which data isn't updated often and doesn't always capture how people's situations change overtime
2. **Effect of the floods**: The floods may have pushed some non-poor households below the poverty threshold; in shock-responsive social protection, assistance to these households is known as a horizonal expansion (expanding coverage) to include previously non-poor households)
3. **Exclusion from the Social Registry**: Through the in-kind distribution field experience, WFP was aware that some households were not included in the social registry; this may be because they were missed in the initial registration, moved to the village since the data collection exercise or could not be validated given data quality issues.

The process included three key steps: 1) designing food security criteria; 2) household visits to a 10% randomly selected sample of households; and 3) community consultation and data collection.



2.1 Step 1 - Food Security Criteria

WFP conducts quarterly phone-based food security monitoring across Lao PDR, known as mobile Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (mVAM). Sample sizes per province are limited, so the previous rounds of mVAM data for Luang Namtha province were combined into a dataset with a total sample size of 1,535 households, which was collected over 16 rounds from September 2022 to September 2024.

To allow for future targeting to be conducted through automatic querying of the social registry database managed by MAF, thereby minimizing costly primary data collection, WFP first reviewed the social registry questionnaire to identify potential criteria available in the database for all households.

Within the mVAM database, WFP then conducted significance tests between the potential list of criteria identified in the social registry database, and food insecurity. The mVAM results showed statistically significant relationships between food insecurity and almost all of the demographic criteria pre-identified in the social registry database. Initial criteria identified included:

- Households with more than 3 children
- Female-headed households
- Head of household aged 60+
- Education level of HH head: none/primary
- Housing type: Walls from wood or bamboo
- Housing type: Floor from wood or bamboo
- Housing type: Roof from zinc, wood or grass[2]
- Affected by floods[3]

It was also agreed to establish a list of exclusion criteria. These criteria were not available in the food security database, so were determined in consultation with Government and WFP staff who know the area and context well:

- Size of land owned: 2Ha or 3Ha (or more) – *threshold to be determined depending on data.*
- Primary income source: government or other stable salary.
- Ownership of high value asset: car, motorcycle or tractor.

Once the criteria were identified, WFP held a meeting with the Department of Labour and Social Work (MLSW) and the Department of Rural Development (MAF). During this meeting, the proposed criteria were presented to the Government for their input and feedback. Government feedback indicated that they agreed with the inclusion criteria, however, it was proposed to remove to high value assets such as motorbikes and tractors from the exclusion criteria, leaving car ownership as exclusion criteria for high value asset ownership. It was also agreed that additional criteria on perceived poverty levels (very poor, medium poor, and little poor) were added in the data collection form.

[2] Housing characteristics were not available in the mVAM data so could not be tested, but based on internal discussions these were included as reliable predictors of food insecurity in this area. The categories included are based on the categories in the PMT model.
[3] As the objective of the assistance was to support with flood recovery, it was agreed that households must have been affected by the floods in order to be eligible for this assistance

2.2 Step 2 - Sample Data Collection

As noted above, the eligibility criteria were drawn from the list of PMT variables to allow for automated eligibility querying in future. However, during this process, the database provided to WFP included only some basic demographic data and the PMT score of each household, but not the detailed criteria. As a result, WFP had to design a process to collect the criteria.

Step 2 of the targeting process was visiting a 10% sample of the households from the Social Registry to collect the food security criteria. The objective of this step was to test the relationship between the food security criteria and the PMT. Ideally, WFP would have visited all households to collect these criteria, but this was not feasible given available timing and resources. As such, the data for the remaining households was collected in Step 3.

Prior to the sample data collection mission, WFP met with representatives of the Provincial Labour and Social Welfare and Provincial Agriculture and Forestry departments to explain the proposed methodology and gather input from local level government officials. During these meetings, the social registry data and criteria were discussed to ensure the government officials understood the data and how to collect the samples for the testing exercise. The following limitations were identified prior to the sample data collection mission:

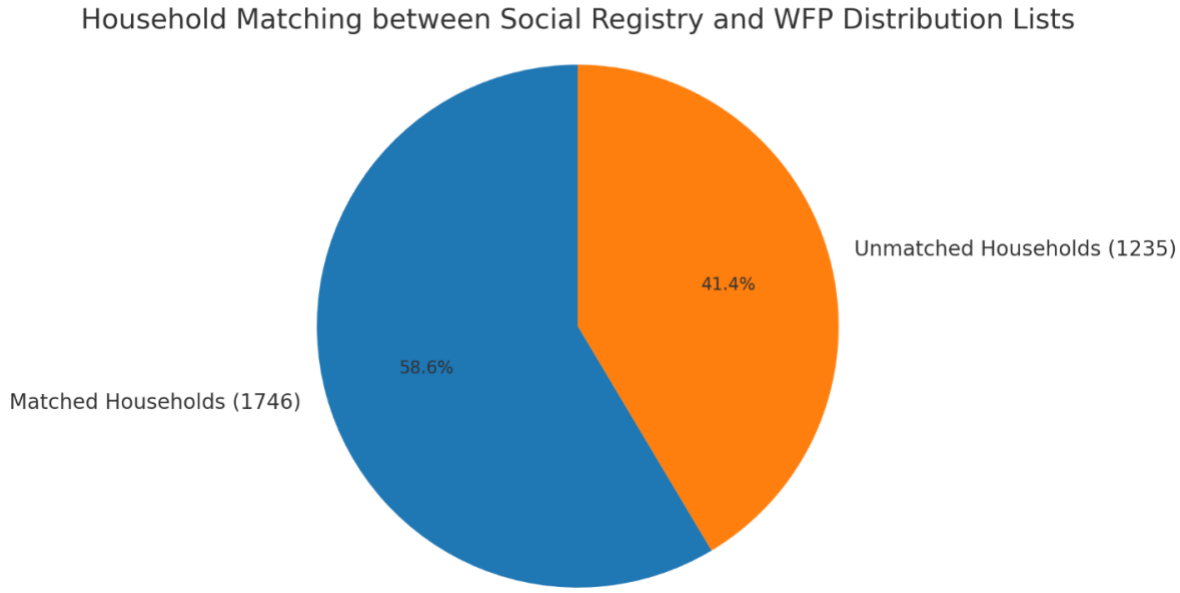
- The number of households in the social registry for the target villages did not match the total number of households identified in WFP's food distribution list, which was implemented two months before this testing exercise.
- Household names in the social registry did not match with the WFP food distribution list. Additionally, lack of ID information such as family books or Government issued IDs in the social registry made cross referencing households challenging.

The sample data collection mission to Luang Namtha Province took place from 14-23 November 2024. The Social Registry list was 2,720 households, so a random sample of 272 households was drawn, plus a backup sample of 272 households in case of difficulty in finding the initial sample. In the end, a total of 300 households were visited during this exercise.

During the data collection, the team faced several operational challenges. The first challenge was that some names included in the Social Registry were not recognized by the communities, this could be attributed to incorrect spelling of names, incorrect head of households or changing household dynamics, like new households in villages. An additional challenge identified was that some households that are considered as poor according to the PMT, but based on household visits their household conditions, were sometimes perceived as being in a better situation than households with higher PMT scores. This was similarly challenging where households had similar PMT scores, but varying household conditions and limited clarity of the impact of the floods. Moreover, it was identified that not all households are included in the Social Registry.

2.3 Step 3 - Community Consultations

Following the sample data collection, WFP prepared an updated, comprehensive list of all households in the target villages. This first required merging and matching the social registry with the beneficiary list from WFP Food Distribution list, and to add any identified households missing from the social registry. Across the 19 target communities for the cash recovery intervention, the social registry list identified 2,971 households while the WFP food distribution list identified 2,981. However, only 1,746 of these households were matchable (59%), while 1,235 households (41%) were not able to be matched.



The reasons for inability to correctly match households between the social registry and the WFP food distribution could be attributed to several challenges including i) new arrivals who moved to the village since the initial social registry data collection was done; ii) individuals who married/established new households since the initial data collection was done; iii) inaccuracies in spelling or head of household names between both lists; iv) lack of unique identifiers like IDs that can automate the linkages.

With the comprehensive list of residents per village, WFP then a planned community consultation mission to Luang Namtha province to collect and validate the inclusion and exclusion criteria for all households through the established Village Disaster Management Committees (VDMC). These village level committees act as the local focal point for disaster risk management, empowering communities to become more resilient and better able to protect themselves from the impacts of hazards. The Village Disaster Management Committee usually consists of 1) Head or deputy head of the village; 2) Head of village social and cultural unit; 3) Deputy Head of Village Finance and Economic Unit; 4) Deputy Head of Village Defense-Public Security Unit; 5) Deputy Head of Village Administration and Authority Unit; 6) Deputy Head of

Village Elderly; 7) Deputy Head of Village Lao Youth Unit; and 8) Deputy Head of Village Lao Women's Union.

The community consultation mission took place from 23-27 December 2024. During the discussions, the VDMC provided the demographic and housing data required for each household. This step was designed to get community input, but not to allow communities to determine eligibility – potential bias from local leaders was carefully managed by WFP staff. This step also allowed an opportunity whereby households who were excluded from the Social Registry and WFP in-kind distribution list could be added, if committees confirmed that residents met the inclusion criteria and indeed were missing from both lists.

During the consultation mission, additional operational challenges were noted. Considering the challenges mentioned in matching the social registry to other list, the practical solution was to add households that could be matched, noting that these households may be in the social registry, but not able to match correctly. Another challenge identified was the use of the VDMC to provide and validate household level information based on their collective knowledge and not collect directly from household members, which could affect data quality and accuracy.

3 Results

3.1 Sample Data Collection Results

The visit to the 10% sample households showed that 20% of the sample were poor at the PMT60 threshold, and 43% were poor at the PMT70 threshold. This demonstrated variation in the application of the inclusion and exclusion criteria as outlined in the following tables.

Inclusion Criteria Prevalence	
3+ children	17%*
Female headed household	11%
Elderly (60+) headed household	29%*
Household head with no education or primary education	48%*
Household with disabled members	7%
Wall from roof or bamboo	20%*
Roof from zinc, wood, grass	20%*
Floor from wood or bamboo	9%*

*Statistically significant (p<.05) negative relationship with PMT score (households who meet these criteria have lower PMT score)

Exclusion Criteria Prevalence	
3+ HA land	11%*
Tractor	45%*
Car	35%*
Tuktuk	9%*
Main income source: Skilled wage labour	29%
Not affected by floods	9%
Additional criteria collected for consideration	
Cow	24%*
Buffalo	2%*
Goat	2%
*Statistically significant (p<.05) relationship with PMT score	

Notes on exclusion criteria:

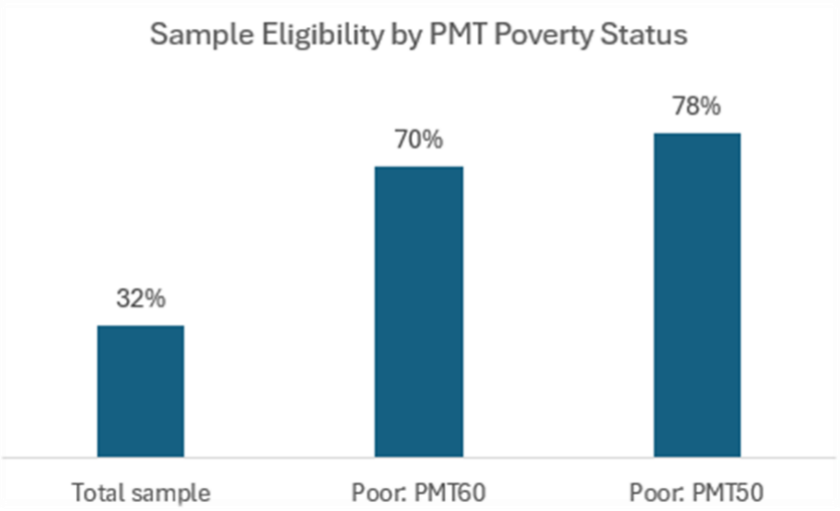
- *Livelihoods:* Households were asked their main source of income over the past 30 days. Multiple options were considered on how to group the response options, including 'vulnerable livelihoods' such as aid, borrowing, selling assets (as an inclusion criteria) and skilled wage labour (as an exclusion criteria). However, none of the options were significant in the statistical tests, and none showed a clear relationship with the enumerator qualitative perspective on the vulnerability of the household. As such, it was recommended not to include this criterion from this dataset, but to discuss and consider during the community phase of the process.
- *High value assets*: In conducting the statistical tests on the high value assets, the data showed that the high value agricultural assets were associated with lower PMT scores. This is likely a result of a mixed urban and rural sample, where the rural areas tend to be poorer and urban areas do not own agricultural assets. In addition, as the high value assets were mostly specific to rural areas, using such a list would unfairly penalise rural households over urban households. As such, it was decided to use only car ownership as high-value asset exclusion criteria (which was associated with higher PMT scores). In

addition, this aligned with the government recommendation noted above, to consider only car ownership as the exclusion criteria / high value asset.

Out of 300 households visited, 95 (32%) were classified as eligible: meeting at least 2 inclusion criteria, not affected by floods and not owning a car.

3.2 Comparison of Eligibility vs PMT Classification

Based on this eligibility status, WFP then examined the relationship between food security eligibility and the PMT. While 32% of the total sample were eligible, when we look at only those who are poor (below the PMT 60% threshold of 556,699), 70% were eligible (30/43). And among those even poorer (below the PMT 50% threshold of 469,184), 78% were eligible (14/18). This indicates a strong relationship between the food security-based eligibility and the PMT poverty status, and a possibility to use the PMT as a starting point for future eligibility decisions. However, the correlation between the two did not show as significant – but this is likely driven by the very small sample of poor households (only 43 below PMT60).



3.3 Final Data Collection Results

The final dataset included 3,005 households, including 1,789 (60%) from the original Social Registry list, with a PMT score.

Eligibility Results:

The Village Disaster Management Committees provided the criteria for all households in their villages who had not already been visited during the sample data collection. The results align very closely with the sample data collection.

Inclusion Criteria Prevalence		Sample results
3+ children	16%	17%
Female headed household	13%	11%
Elderly (60+) headed household	29%	29%
Household head with no education or primary education	38%	48%
Household with disabled members	6%	7%
Wall from roof or bamboo	20%	20%
Roof from zinc, wood, grass	19%	20%
Floor from wood or bamboo	20%	9%

Exclusion Criteria		Sample results
Not affected by floods	12%	9%
Owns a car	36%	35%
3 or more regular salaries in household	22%	N/A

Notes on exclusion criteria:

- *Livelihoods:* Like the discussion after the sample data collection, the criteria related to livelihoods prompted lots of discussion. Staff who had participated in the field data collection felt that the salary question was not clearly enough phrased to be used to exclude households. In addition, the question does not consider the size of the household or the number of people dependent on each salary. As such, the conclusion was to exclude this criterion.
- *Flood Effect*: Similarly, for 'not affected by floods' the staff who had been part of the consultations felt that the question had not be clearly phrased or clearly understood by the committees. They felt that the interpretation was direct effect of floods, such as loss of land or business. However, the widespread impact of the floods was felt by nearly everyone – as most people had felt an economic effect, such as loss of wages. As such, the conclusion was also to exclude this criterion if the household was also assessed to be very poor (see notes on qualitative perspective below).

Thus, only a single exclusion criterion was maintained: the 36% of households who owned cars were excluded.

Incorporation of Qualitative Perspective: Much available targeting literature recommends the using the combination of quantitative and qualitative perspectives to reduce errors. As such, during the community consultations, the committees also provided a qualitative assessment of the poverty status of all households in their villages. This was used to inform the final eligibility decisions. The community assessment concluded that over four-fifths of the village residents were not poor at all, and only 15% were medium or very poor.

Poverty classification[4]	Households	Percentage
Not poor	2,436	82%
Little poor	80	3%
Medium poor	238	8%
Very poor	215	7%

The final inclusion criteria included five demographic criteria and three housing criteria (eight criteria total). Given the high correlation between the three housing variables, these were each weighted at 0.5, giving a total of 6.5 possible points under inclusion criteria. Based on the final review of criteria, initial eligibility was determined based on reaching at least 1.5 points out of the total 6.5 points. In addition, all households had to be affected by the floods and could not own a car (exclusion criteria). This resulted in a total of 760 eligible households.

Considering the community poverty assessment, an additional 60 households were included – those who did not meet the WFP eligibility criteria (1.5 / 6.5), but were considered very poor by the community and did not own a car. This brought the total to 820 eligible households based on the criteria applied. This was equivalent to 27 % of the 3,005 households in the total dataset.

Relationship with PMT: To assess the strength of the relationship with the PMT, and to determine the most appropriate PMT threshold to use in future, the analysis focused on two comparisons: 1) WFP eligibility status versus PMT status, and 2) community poverty status versus PMT status.

Sample: Although the final list of households per village was comprised of multiple sources (Social Registry list, WFP distribution list, and additions from community consultations), the analysis could be conducted only on those households with a PMT score – i.e. from the initial Social Registry list. This reduced the dataset to 1,789 households, of whom 479 households (27%) were eligible.

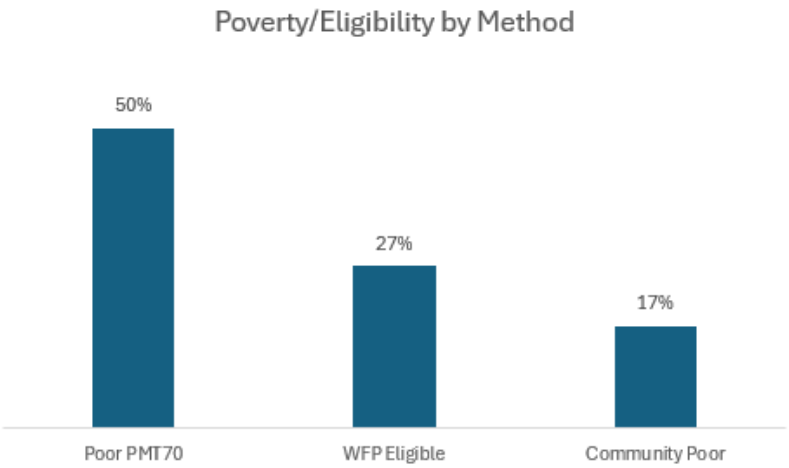
[4] In two villages, the classification was binary yes/no for all 492 residents. For the purposes of the analysis, no was reclassified into non-poor (467 households) and yes was reclassified into very poor (25 households).

Method: To understand how well a method classifies households as poor or non-poor, the methodology draws from medical literature and relies on two core measures. In this analysis, *sensitivity* is defined as the proportion of poor households correctly identified as poor. *Specificity* is defined as the proportion of non-poor households correctly identified as non- poor. Sensitivity and specificity are inversely related; as sensitivity increases, specificity tends to decrease, and vice versa.

An important caveat to this analysis is that it requires one 'true' poverty status for each household, against which to measure the effectiveness of the other methods. Ideally, food security outcome data or expenditure data would be used for the true status, however this data was not available. As such, in the first comparison, the WFP eligibility status is considered the 'true' status of the household; in the second comparison, the community poverty status is considered the 'true' status of the household. Using these, the analysis assesses how well the PMT identifies households in need, and which threshold is most accurate.

3.4 Results

It is first important to highlight that the proportion of households classified as poor or eligible vary widely per method. According to the community classification, only 17% of the households were poor and 83% were non-poor. WFP's final eligibility classification found 27% of households to be eligible for assistance. And the PMT-based poverty classification varies from 0% to 80%, depending on which threshold is used. Based on the results described below, the 70th percentile threshold is the most accurate for this exercise, which classifies 50% of the population in this area as poor.[5] This wide range inherently affects the comparison between methods, as described below.

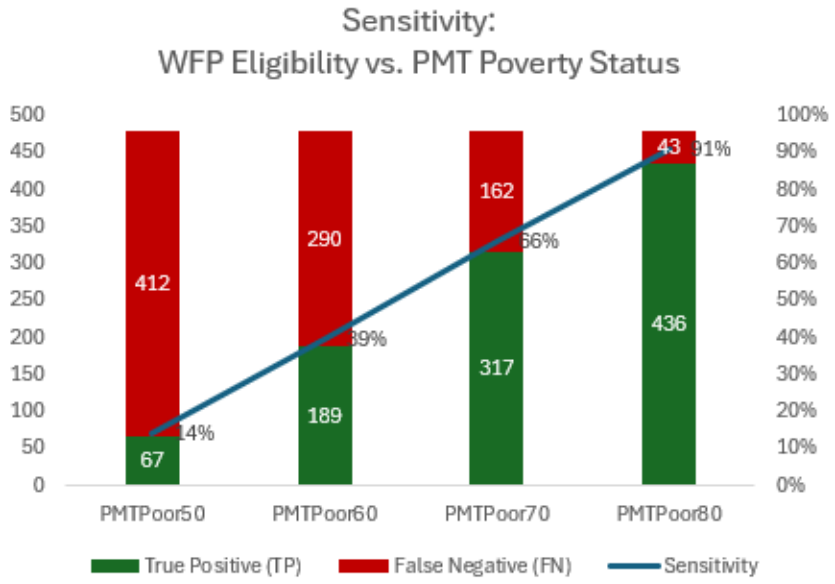


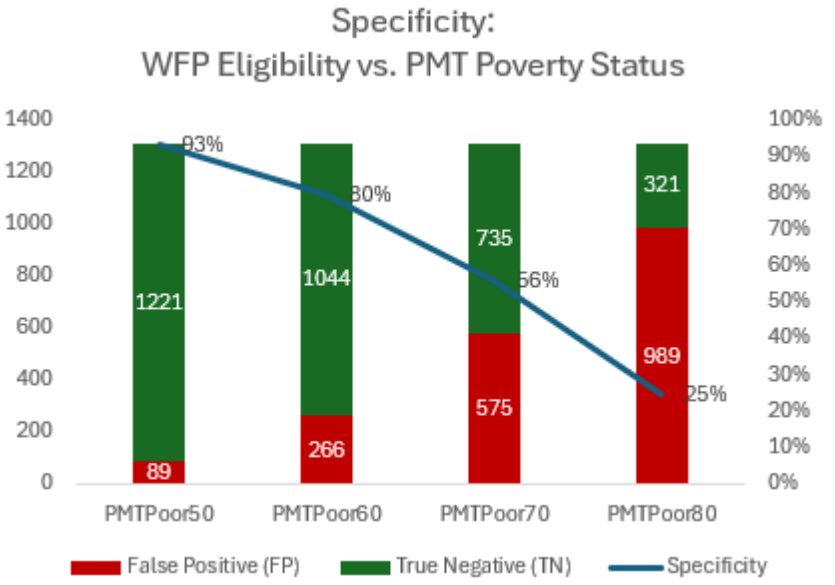
WFP Eligibility Versus PMT: Within the dataset, 27% or 479 households are classified as eligible, determined through the combination of criteria explained above. At the 50th percentile

[5] Refer to Annex 1 for the proportions of poor household per grouping.

threshold of the PMT score, only 14% of these are correctly classified as poor, leaving an exclusion error of 86%. The proportion of households correctly classified as poor rises to 39% (60th), 66% (70th) and 91% (80th), as the PMT coverage rises with higher thresholds.

On the other side, when examining potential inclusion errors, 73% or 1,310 households were classified as ineligible through the WFP criteria. At the 50th percentile threshold of the PMT score, 85% are correctly classified as non-poor, leaving an inclusion error of 17%. The proportion of households correctly classified as non-poor drops to 80% (60th), 56% (70th) and 25% (80th), as the PMT coverage rises with higher thresholds.





The 'best' threshold to use as a starting place for WFP eligibility decisions is the one with the least errors, considering both sensitivity and specificity. On balance, the best option would be

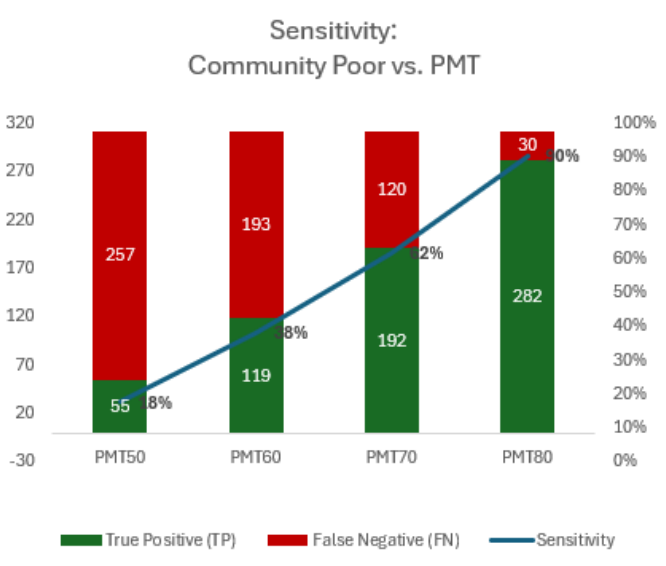
PMT70, which shows that 66% of eligible households are correctly captured as poor, and 56% of ineligible households are correctly captured as non-poor.

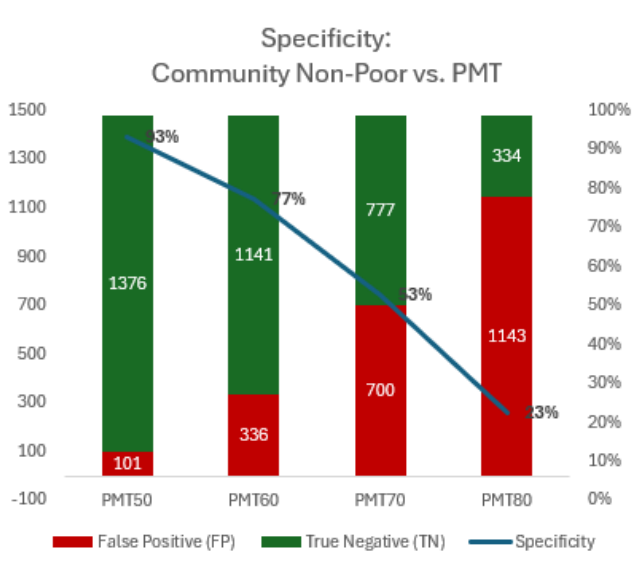
Community Classification Versus PMT:

Poor/Non-Poor: As noted above, the communities classified 17% of households (312) as poor, and 83% (1,477) as non-poor. At the 50th percentile threshold of the PMT score, only 18% of these are correctly classified as poor, leaving an exclusion error of 82%. The proportion of households correctly classified as poor rises to 38% (60th), 62% (70th) and 90% (80th), as the PMT coverage rises with higher thresholds.

When examining potential inclusion errors, 83% or 1,477 households were classified non-poor by the communities. At the 50th percentile threshold of the PMT score, 93% are correctly classified as non-poor, leaving an inclusion error of 7%. The proportion of households correctly classified as non-poor drops to 77% (60th), 53% (70th) and 23% (80th), as the PMT coverage rises with higher thresholds.

Thus, when looking at the binary poor/non-poor community classification, the most accurate PMT threshold to use, reducing errors on both sides, is PMT70, which correctly identifies 62% as poor, and correctly excludes 63% as non-poor.





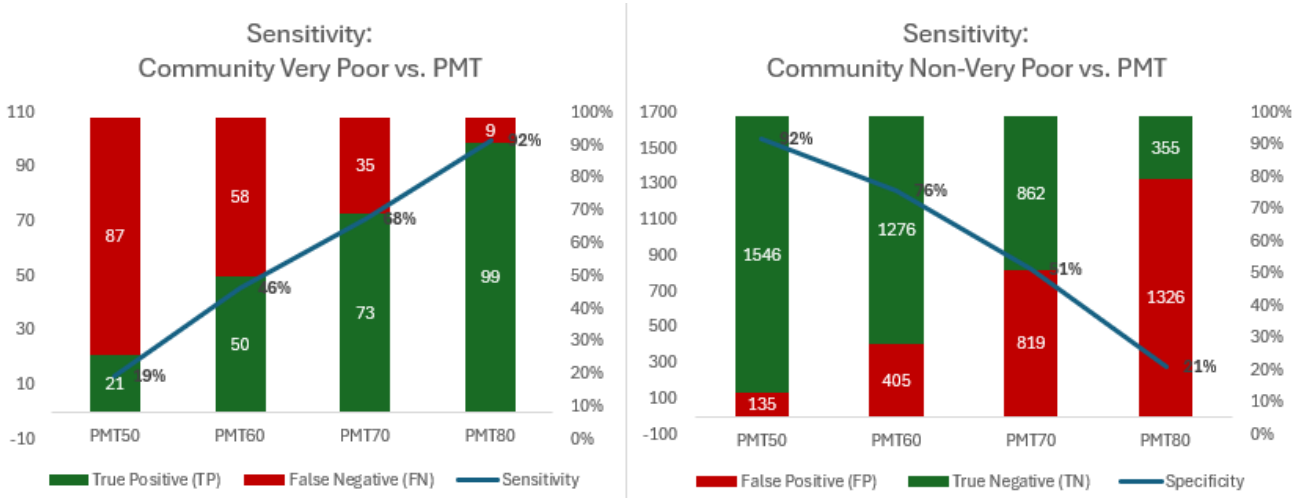
Very Poor / Not Very Poor: As the communities classified households into three poverty groups (little poor, medium poor and very poor), and the final WFP eligibility considered only 'very poor', it is worthwhile to redo the analysis considering only this group. This allows understanding of how well the PMT correlates with the very poor classification, and which threshold would be most appropriate if 'very poor' households are the target.

As noted above, the communities classified only 7% of households (215) as poor. At the 50th percentile threshold of the PMT score, only 19% of these are correctly classified as poor, leaving

an exclusion error of 81%. The proportion of households correctly classified as poor rises to 46% (60th), 68% (70th) and 92% (80th), as the PMT coverage rises with higher thresholds.

When examining potential inclusion errors, 93% or 2,754 households were not classified as very poor by the communities – this group includes the non-poor, little poor and medium poor. At the 50th percentile threshold of the PMT score, 92% are correctly classified as not very poor, leaving an inclusion error of 8%. The proportion of households correctly classified as not very poor drops to 76% (60th), 51% (70th) and 21% (80th), as the PMT coverage rises with higher thresholds.

Overall, when considering the very poor group, the PMT threshold with the lowest errors on both sides is PMT60, though the difference between PMT60 and PMT70 is minimal in this analysis.



3.5 Results Summary

Overall, the PMT70 threshold shows the lowest error rates when compared to WFP eligibility status and the community determined poverty status. With the PMT70, 66% of the WFP eligible households are correctly identified as poor, and 68% of the community classified 'very poor' are correctly identified as poor. Therefore, if the PMT70 status is used as a starting point for eligibility determination, it will correctly identify around two-thirds of the eligible households. It would result in an exclusion error of around one-third.

The PMT70 classifies more households as poor than the other methods, which results in a higher proportion (56%) of WFP ineligible households incorrectly classified as poor (56%), and 51% of those classified by the community as not-very poor incorrectly identified as PMT poor. This would be an inclusion error of roughly half.

As discussed below, this implies that the PMT70 could be a good starting point for future targeting, with errors to be corrected through community consultations.

4 Operations & Post Distribution Monitoring

January 2025 was used for operational preparation, and cash distributions took place in February 2025. In preparation for the cash distributions, through community discussions, two villages explained that if not all residents would receive assistance, they did not wish to participate in the distributions at all. This is further evidence of how contentious the concept of household targeting still is, and the importance of sensitization at all levels.

In the end, 638 households received a total of 3.6 million Kip. A small sample of households (155) were surveyed through Post-Distribution Monitoring in March 2025. Of these, 73% explained that they knew how people were chosen to receive assistance, indicating that more effort could be made in future to properly explain the process and criteria. However, 90% of beneficiaries reported that the selection process was conducted fairly.

The PDM also flagged an important problem with redistribution of assistance. In the PDM, 40 beneficiaries (26%) across six villages raised a concern about redistribution. This included redistribution of entitlements across village residents, and redistribution to village heads. The concern around redistribution remains important, as it again indicates an underlying disagreement with the concept of household targeting. In the After-Action Review, held in Luang Namtha in April 2025, participants explained that the redistribution was not a reflection of the targeting accuracy, but a general disagreement with household level targeting. Further sensitization and explanation may be helpful to help dissuade redistribution, in addition to consultations with local and central level government.

5 Recommendations and Conclusions

This section aims to provide a strengthened narrative that encapsulates the breadth and depth of the work undertaken in piloting the Social Registry for early recovery food security targeting in Luang Namtha Province. It includes a summary of enabling and constraining factors, key insights and actions in beneficiary identification, and actionable recommendations.

5.1 Key Enabling and Constraining Factors

Enabling Factors	
Government Collaboration	Strong support and collaboration from the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MLSW) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) were crucial in designing and implementing the targeting process.
Existing Social Registry	The national social registry (Poverty Graduation and Development Database) provided a foundational dataset, which, despite its limitations, offered a starting point for identifying potentially vulnerable households.

mVAM Data	Utilization of mobile Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (mVAM) data to establish food security criteria, ensuring the selection process was aligned with actual food insecurity indicators.
Community Input	Engagement of Village Disaster Management Committees (VDMC) to validate household data and provide qualitative assessments, enhancing the accuracy and acceptance of the targeting results.
Constraining Factors	
Data Limitations	The social registry lacked detailed criteria, necessitating additional data collection efforts. Discrepancies and matching issues between the social registry and WFP food distribution lists posed significant challenges.
PMT Model Conceptual Differences	The PMT model's static and primarily economic view contrasted with the dynamic factors influencing food insecurity. The questionnaire does not consider the size of the household or the number of people dependent on each salary.
Accuracy of Information	Inaccuracies in household names and the absence of unique identifiers like family book numbers hindered accurate matching and validation of household data.
Targeting Accuracy	The study faced the challenges of selecting eligible households based on limited resources, leading to potential community tensions, varying household conditions, and unclear impacts of floods.
Qualitative Perspective and Bias	Qualitative perspectives might lead to bias due to community perceptions, which may underestimate or misclassify poverty levels because of social dynamics or subjective interpretations.

5.2 Key Insights and Actions Taken

Food Security Criteria Design: WFP designed food security criteria based on mVAM data, identifying statistically significant relationships between food insecurity and demographic criteria available in the social registry.

Government Consultation: Collaboration with the Department of Labour and Social Work (MLSW) and the Department of Rural Development (MAF) ensured government input and feedback on the proposed criteria.

Sample Data Collection: A 10% sample of households from the Social Registry was visited to collect food security criteria and test the relationship between these criteria and the PMT.

Community Consultation: Comprehensive lists of residents were created, and community consultations were conducted through Village Disaster Management Committees (VDMC) to validate inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Eligibility Refinement: The final inclusion criteria included five demographic and three housing criteria, with eligibility based on reaching at least 1.5 points out of 6.5, being affected by floods, and not owning a car. An additional 60 households were included based on community poverty assessments.

PMT Threshold Analysis: Analysis focused on WFP eligibility status versus PMT status and community poverty status versus PMT status to assess the strength of the relationship with the PMT and determine the most appropriate PMT threshold to use in the future.

5.3 Recommendations

1. **Data Sharing Agreement:** Establishing a formal data-sharing agreement between WFP and relevant government ministries — particularly the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), which manages the national social registry — is essential to enable timely and effective use of registry data for early recovery and shock-responsive interventions. Such an agreement should define clear protocols for secure access to both household-level data and the full set of variables used in the Proxy Means Test (PMT), including demographic, socio-economic, and housing information. The agreement should include i) Scope of data access; ii) Timeliness and frequency; iii) Data protection and privacy; iv) Shared analytical capacity; and v) Sustainability and integration:
2. **PMT70 as a Starting Point for Targeting:** The analysis conducted during the pilot indicates that the 70th percentile threshold of the Proxy Means Test (PMT70) offers the best balance between inclusion and exclusion errors when compared against both WFP's food security-based eligibility and community poverty classifications. As such, the PMT70 threshold should be adopted as a practical starting point for identifying potentially eligible households for early recovery and shock-responsive interventions. However, PMT70 alone is not sufficient. To ensure targeting is context-appropriate and socially accepted, it must be paired with community-based verification and updated data on household conditions. Specifically, WFP recommends the following actions:
3. **Operational Improvements:** To enhance the efficiency, reliability, and transparency of future early recovery targeting exercises, several operational improvements should be prioritized. These improvements address key lessons from the pilot and aim to strengthen the overall integrity and usability of the social registry in emergency contexts. This includes:

a) **Improve Accuracy and Completeness of Household Data:**
   - Ensure that household names are recorded consistently and accurately across datasets (e.g., social registry, food distribution lists) to enable matching and verification.
   - Promote standardized data entry procedures at the point of registration and during updates to minimize spelling errors and discrepancies in household identifiers.

b) **Integrate Unique Household Identifiers:**
   - Incorporate government-issued identification numbers (e.g., family book numbers or national IDs) into the social registry to facilitate data interoperability and reduce duplication or misclassification.
   - Where official IDs are unavailable, consider generating unique household codes based on a standardized set of demographic markers (e.g., head of household name, date of birth, village code).

c) **Establish an Update Protocol for Excluded or Newly Vulnerable Households:**
   - Develop and institutionalize a clear process for regularly updating the registry to capture households that were missed during initial registration or have recently become vulnerable due to shocks (e.g., floods, displacement, job loss).
   - Leverage community-level mechanisms, such as VDMCs or village heads, to identify and report these households in a structured and accountable manner.

d) **Ensure Final Community Verification of Target Lists:**
   - Prior to any assistance distribution, conduct a final verification exercise in each village with the involvement of local stakeholders to confirm the accuracy and fairness of the targeted beneficiary list.
   - Use this step to capture last-minute exclusions, resolve disputes, and increase transparency and community ownership of the process.

e) **Digitize and Streamline Field Operations:**
   - Use mobile data collection tools with preloaded household data and automated checks to improve data quality and speed during field visits.
   - Establish real-time dashboards to track coverage, identify gaps, and flag potential data inconsistencies for review.

4. **Inclusion of Additional Variables:** To enhance the accuracy and relevance of the social registry for food and nutrition security targeting, future data collection rounds (e.g., 2026) should include additional variables that are predictive of household vulnerability beyond economic status. These variables should be selected based on their demonstrated association with food insecurity, malnutrition, and coping capacity, as well as their feasibility for regular collection and integration into the registry. Recommended indicators to consider include:

- **Food Consumption Score (FCS):** The FCS is a widely used indicator to assess a household's food security and dietary diversity. It's calculated based on the frequency of consumption of different food groups within a 7-day period, with each group weighted according to its nutritional value
- **Livelihood Coping strategies index:** indicating whether households have resorted to negative coping strategies such as borrowing food, reducing meal size/frequency etc.
- **Recent experience of shocks:** including flood, drought, crop failure, job loss, or displacement within the past 6–12 months to flag households affected by covariate or idiosyncratic shocks (e.g. Shock Exposure Index).
- **Dependency ratio:** number of dependents (children, elderly, persons with disabilities) per working-age adult, which can help identify households with high care burdens or limited earning capacity.
- **Primary livelihood source and stability:** distinguishing between stable and unstable income sources (e.g., informal labour, remittances, subsistence farming, etc.), which can affect resilience to food insecurity.
- **Presence of nutritionally vulnerable individuals:** such as pregnant/lactating women, children under 5, and elderly household members, as they are disproportionately affected by shocks and food insecurity.
- **Access to markets and services:** distance to markets, health centres, or schools can impact both economic vulnerability and food/nutrition access, especially in remote or marginalized areas.

5. **Strengthen Redress and Adaptive Mechanisms Beyond CFM:** Given the dynamic nature of household vulnerability, redress mechanisms should extend beyond WFP's existing Complaints and Feedback Mechanism (CFM) to ensure responsiveness to changing needs. One important opportunity is to link with government-led redress being developed through social assistance and development programmes, including grievance redress structures managed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) and other relevant ministries. These could include village- and district-level mechanisms that allow households to raise concerns, request reconsideration, or appeal decisions related to social programme eligibility. Incorporating these systems into early recovery targeting processes would strengthen accountability, enhance community trust, and support alignment with national systems. Additional measures — such as periodic community validation meetings and digital reporting platforms — can further enable continuous identification of newly vulnerable households and correction of exclusion errors over time.
6. **Additional Analysis/Assessments:** Conduct further **analysis/assessments** to better understand the relationship between poverty, food insecurity, and other vulnerabilities to inform the design of shock-responsive social protection. In particular, the upcoming Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA), planned for 2025, presents a critical opportunity to validate and enrich the national social registry data. The CFSVA will collect detailed household-level data on food security, nutrition,

livelihoods, and coping strategies — information that is often not captured in social registries, which are typically focused on static socioeconomic indicators. By analysing overlaps and gaps between CFSVA findings and existing social registry classifications (e.g., PMT scores), the analysis/assessments can identify how well the registry reflects real-time and multidimensional vulnerabilities. This will help determine whether proxy variables currently used in the registry are adequate predictors of food insecurity and whether new indicators should be incorporated in future registry updates. Moreover, linking CFSVA data with registry records will improve the evidence base for refining targeting criteria and enhance the capacity of the social registry to serve as a foundational tool for early recovery and shock-responsive programming

5.4 Conclusions

The social registry serves as a valuable starting point for early recovery food security targeting. Utilizing the database directly to select eligible households could expedite the process, contingent upon a data-sharing agreement. Triangulation with community feedback is essential, necessitating a visit to discuss with communities, add missing households, and correct statuses. This approach enhances the accuracy and acceptance of targeting outcomes.

The pilot in Luang Namtha Province demonstrates that the national social registry, while originally designed for poverty-focused programming, has significant potential as a foundational tool for early recovery and shock-responsive targeting — provided it is adapted to reflect dynamic and multidimensional vulnerabilities.

The use of PMT70 as a starting point for identifying potentially food-insecure households proved effective, offering the best balance between inclusion and exclusion errors when compared to food security-based eligibility and community poverty assessments. However, the pilot confirms that PMT scores alone are insufficient. To achieve accurate, accepted, and context-appropriate targeting, the registry must be triangulated with community consultations, contextual criteria, and up-to-date household data.

Key operational lessons emphasize the importance of data quality, including accurate household names, use of unique identifiers, and processes for capturing newly vulnerable or excluded households. Community-level engagement — particularly through Village Disaster Management Committees (VDMCs) — remains critical to validate eligibility, build transparency, and ensure local ownership.

Looking forward, the establishment of a formal data-sharing agreement with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) is essential to enable timely access to the full registry dataset, strengthen coordination, and institutionalize the use of national systems for emergency response. Similarly, redress mechanisms must go beyond the CFM, incorporating government-led grievance structures and periodic community validation to ensure that targeting remains responsive as vulnerabilities evolve.

The upcoming Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA) in 2025 offers a vital opportunity to validate the proxy indicators in the registry, explore additional variables predictive of food and nutrition insecurity, and refine targeting models. This will strengthen the registry's ability to serve not only as a poverty database, but as a robust, dynamic platform for identifying those most in need during and after shocks.

Overall, the pilot demonstrates that with practical adjustments, operational improvements, and stronger collaboration with government systems, the social registry can be a powerful tool for delivering equitable and timely assistance to vulnerable populations — supporting the transition from short-term response to sustainable, shock-responsive social protection.

6 Annex: Model Diagnostics

PMT National Threshold		Poor Households	Non-Poor Households	% of Poor Households
PMTPoor10	232,765	0	1,789	0%
PMTPoor20	289,834	0	1,789	0%
PMTPoor30	345,531	9	1,780	1%
PMTPoor40	407,651	46	1,743	3%
PMTPoor50	469,184	156	1,633	9%
PMTPoor60	556,699	455	1,334	25%
PMTPoor70	668,526	892	897	50%
PMTPoor80	832,267	1425	364	80%

WFP Eligibility	Number of Households	% of Households
Eligible	479	27%
Ineligible	1310	73%

Community Classification	Number of Households	% of Households
Non-Poor	1,477	83%
Little Poor	54	3%
Medium Poor	150	8%
Very Poor	108	6%

Community Classification	PMT Classification	Type
Poor	Poor	✅ True Positive
Poor	Non-Poor	❌ False Negative

Not Poor	Poor	❌ False Positive
Not Poor	Non-Poor	✅ True Negative

WFP Classification	PMT Classification	Type
Eligible	Poor	✅ True Positive
Ineligible	Non-Poor	❌ False Negative
Eligible	Poor	❌ False Positive
Ineligible	Non-Poor	✅ True Negative