



RURAL SYNERGIES



MEXICO

*Building bridges between social and
productive inclusion policies*



With the technical support of:

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Institutional analysis of the Proyecto de Inclusión Productiva Rural (PROINPRO) - Mexico (2016-2017)

KEY MESSAGES

Coordination between social protection and rural productive development programmes can help poor and at-risk households escape the poverty trap and break its intergenerational transmission. These programmes also help to improve households' resilience when dealign with external shocks or crises. This argument is especially relevant in contexts such as the one we are currently facing as a result of COVID-19.



While social protection provides financial support and can immediately alleviate some of the conditions associated with poverty, productive development programmes generate the means for a sustained escape from poverty by promoting increased productivity of small family units and their access to limited resources and assets such as land, water, financial services, technical advice, and markets.



Based on these premises, this document offers an evaluation of the results of the institutional analysis carried out as part of the Proyecto de Inclusión Productiva Rural (PROINPRO) in coordination with the PROSPERA Social Inclusion Programme, and other productive development programmes (PDPs) aimed at the rural population and administered by other public bodies.



The design of the PROINPRO programme was devised as part of PROSPERA's productive inclusion strategy, which was based on the possibility of coordinating the programme with the existing PDPs offered in Mexico. Robust political support to implement this strategy was provided by the Technical Subcommittee on Employment, Income and Savings (STEIA), an inter-ministerial coordination

committee led by the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit.



However, the results of the analysis are not positive, as they show a set of difficulties that prevented PROINPRO from being coordinated as planned in terms of the public provision of productive development programmes. These difficulties highlight the need to complement political support with adequate and timely institutional arrangements, which PROSPERA's productive inclusion strategy lacked, thus impacting PROINPRO's capacity for action.



The main technical aspects for a viable design, which were not considered, are budgetary aspects, the targetting criteria of the programmes, and differences in the definition of the target population. This was especially critical in a context marked by the ineffectiveness of the STEIA and institutional inertia that tended to place the main emphasis on rationales of a sectoral and compartmentalised nature.



The recommendations derived from this experience point to the importance of simplifying formal aspects of coordination and reinforcing these with budgetary mechanisms, in addition to generating clear mechanisms for vertical coordination. The current presidency has interrupted many of the programmes and replaced them with other programmes that focus on small farmers. Given this scenario, it is crucial to promote synergies, such as those stated, to support the recovery of rural households. Households which are requiring plenty of short-term support, but above all, will need strategies aimed at strengthening their capacity to respond to crises.



BELOW IS A SUMMARY OF THE INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE PROYECTO DE INCLUSIÓN PRODUCTIVA RURAL (PROINPRO), INTENDED TO ANALYSE THE INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS THAT DETERMINED THE EFFECTIVENESS AND RESTRICTIONS OF THE COORDINATION BETWEEN THIS PROGRAMME AND THE GOVERNMENT BODIES IN CHARGE OF THE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES WITH WHICH IT MUST CONNECT. ACCORDINGLY, PROINPRO IS ANALYSED BOTH IN ITS COORDINATION WITH THE PROSPERA PROGRAMME, AND WITH THE PROVISION OF PRODUCTIVE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES (PDPS) THAT EXIST IN DIFFERENT MINISTRIES AT THE FEDERAL EXECUTIVE LEVEL. THE DOCUMENT DESCRIBES THE PROGRAMMES INVOLVED AND PRESENTS THE MAIN RESULTS OF THE INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS, WHICH SUPPORTS THE RECOMMENDATIONS THAT HAVE BEEN MADE.

PROGRAMA DE INCLUSIÓN SOCIAL PROSPERA

PROSPERA (2014-2019) was the main social development programme in the country, and was administered by the Ministry of Social Development (SEDESOL). It corresponds to the third stage in the development of conditional cash transfer programmes in Mexico, aimed at financially supporting households and increasing the education, healthcare and nutritional capacities for children and adolescents of families living in poverty. PROSPERA initiated its operations with a coverage of 6.5 million households.

According to the 2018 Federation Expenditure Budget, an amount of MXN 46,396,000,660 (at current prices), equivalent to US\$ ppp 5,083,379,057¹, was allocated in that year. This is equivalent to 44% of the total budget for the Social Development sector.

PROSPERA continued the interventions designed to expand capacities in education, healthcare and food, and mainly for children and adolescents of families living in poverty. It also extended its scope of action to promote productive, labour and financial inclusion of its beneficiaries, as well as their effective access to social rights (Diario Oficial de la Federación, 2017). PROSPERA's target population was made up of households with an estimated per capita income below the adjusted Minimum Well-being Line,² and whose socioeconomic and income conditions prevented them from developing the capacities of their members in terms of food, healthcare and education (Diario Oficial de la Federación, 2018).

Beneficiary households received bimonthly monetary transfers and in-kind support, corresponding to the various concepts that are

grouped into the food, healthcare and educational components. This support varied according to the number of members under the age of nine and, where appropriate, to the number of scholarship recipients and their grade level, as well as the number of older adults in the households. The families that participated in the programme had to fulfil co-responsibilities in terms of the education and health components, compliance with which was verified every two months.

PROSPERA incorporated a linking component with respect to the productive, labour and financial inclusion of family members. In terms of productive inclusion, the programme focused its efforts on promoting the inclusion of members of beneficiary families aged 18 and over, and who were interested in participating in this type of initiative. The programme also proposed the promotion of joint actions with government, private and civil society institutions for the development of productive projects that generate income. PROSPERA was closed and wound up its operations in 2019 after Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) took office as President of the Republic.



¹ 9.13 Mexican pesos per U.S. dollar, 2018 value

² The adjusted Minimum Well-being Line is obtained from the urban and rural minimum well-being lines. These are updated each month and in December 2018 stood at USD 56.65 and USD 79.20, respectively.

PROYECTO DE INCLUSIÓN PRODUCTIVA RURAL PROINPRO

The Proyecto de Inclusión Productiva Rural (PROINPRO) was one of the four working models that PROSPERA implemented to implement the productive inclusion mandate. The other three models were the following: (1) one that was considered traditional and intended as a strategy for linking PROSPERA beneficiaries with the productive development programmes, and which entered into force in 2015; (2) the Programa Piloto Territorios Productivos (PPTP), which was also initiated in 2015 with the aim of being consolidated as an intervention strategy with a territorial approach; and (3) the De la Mano con PROSPERA pilot project, which began operating in 2016, and which sought to adapt the BRAC graduation model to the Mexican context. With the exception of the latter, the three remaining models concluded their activities in 2017 and were replaced in the 2018 fiscal year by the Comprehensive Model of Productive Inclusion. However, the latter was not implemented given that federal elections took place that same year.

PROINPRO began operations in 2016, to offer a linkage scheme that would provide comprehensive support, from the stage of formulating group projects (groups had to be made up of at least five members with 50% + 1 of PROSPERA beneficiaries), until the provision of adequate technical assistance after the group received funding. **Its objective was for PROSPERA beneficiary families in rural areas to increase their income autonomously and sustainably**, through profitable and sustainable productive activities (IFAD, 2015). For this purpose, it sought to promote access to Productive Development Programmes, as well as financial services (IFAD, 2015). However, STEIA's poor performance was one of the arguments for the early closure of PROINPRO in 2018.

The structure of PROINPRO consisted of three components: (1) productive inclusion, which supported the participating families' access to productive investments, and provided technical assistance to strengthen their productive, organisational and managerial capacities, and to seek the sustainable use of natural resources; (2) institutional strengthening, aimed at strengthening PROSPERA's capacities for the implementation of the productive inclusion strategy nationally; and (3) financial inclusion, which provided a transversal axis to the other components (see Figure 1).

³ The BRAC Model (named after its creators, the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee), is a Graduation Model methodology designed to enable the target population to "graduate" from extreme poverty, through the comprehensive improvement of their conditions, and thus become able to establish sustainable improvements in their living standards.

Figure 1
The PROSPERA-PROINPRO structure and components of PROINPRO



PROINPRO focused on 26 municipalities in the states of Guerrero, Hidalgo and Zacatecas, serving 211 towns, followed by 133 towns in 2016 and 78 in 2017. These were selected on the basis of the high incidence of the rural population living in poverty; the significant presence of families served by PROSPERA, especially families with access to land; these were also municipalities included in the National Crusade Against Hunger; they contained an indigenous population; and there was a high proportion of migrant families (IFAD, 2017).

In order to identify families, their entrepreneurial potential was assessed. Based on this, the people with whom the group formation and project development work would continue were then selected. Once this information was systematised, only those who obtained a medium, high and very high valuation in terms of entrepreneurial potential were invited to join the next stage. As a result, 7,553 people participated in 2016 and 5,961 in 2017.

In order to operate PROINPRO, particularly the activities of the first component, PROSPERA's General Directorate for Coordination and

Liaison (DGCV) decided to hire Universidad Autónoma Chapingo as an external agent.

PRODUCTIVE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES LINKED TO PROINPRO

When PROINPRO initiated its operations in 2016, it was expected to be linked to 17 productive development programmes (PROSPERA, 2016). The following year, an adjustment was made in the programme structure at the federal public administration level and potentially linkable programmes were reduced to fourteen (PROSPERA, 2017). However, once project management was carried out by PROINPRO, support was only obtained from two programmes: the Programa de Fomento a la Economía Social, specifically the component that was administered by the **General Directorate of Opciones Productivas**, and the **El Campo en Nuestras Manos** component, which corresponded to the Programa de Apoyo a Pequeños Productores (PAPP), administered by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (SAGARPA).

The **Programa de Opciones Productivas (POP)**, which is part of the Ministry of Social Development (SEDESOL), was created in 2002 and began to operate in 2003. Its aim was to help those living in poverty develop “productive projects and opportunities for self-employment that allow them to increase their income, their families’ well-being, and access to savings and credit schemes” (Diario Oficial de la Federación, 2003).

POP operated independently under the SEDESOL’s General Directorate of Productive Programmes until 2015. In 2016, it was then incorporated into the Programa de Fomento a la Economía Social, which became a decentralised body of SEDESOL. Despite this merger and the consequent modification in the forms of support, POP retains its core component for providing support for productive projects.

Thus, the Programme provides support to those Organisations of the Social Sector of the Economy that run productive activities or initiatives, but whose means and capacities are limited in terms of consolidating said initiatives as alternatives for productive inclusion, and which are located in areas of focus that meet the territorial targetting criteria of the programme.

These criteria are: municipalities with a medium, high or very high degree of social marginalisation; municipalities in rural priority attention zones (ZAP); municipalities with at least 25% of their population living in urban ZAP; municipalities with at least 50% of their population with incomes below the welfare threshold; municipalities

that meet the support criteria defined by the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples (CDI); municipalities with a Social Banking office (including the presence of Cooperative Savings and Loan Societies or Community Funding Societies).

For its part, the **El Campo en Nuestras Manos** component forms part of Programa Apoyo a Pequeños Productores S266 (PAPP), which began activities in 2016 as a result of the programmatic restructuring at the federal public administration level. The goal for El Campo en Nuestras Manos is to increase the agricultural, livestock, aquaculture and fishing production of Mexican women in rural and periurban areas, through kitchen-garden support packages and family chicken and rabbit modules for selfconsumption, along with productive assets and capacity development. The latter is aimed at “women aged 18 to 65 who live in conditions of poverty, along with small farmers belonging to strata E1, E2 and E3” (Diario Oficial de la Nación, 2016). The programme covers nationwide rural and peri-urban areas, according to the location of the target population. The latter is made up of rural subsistence economic units with and without links to the market, and rural economic units in transition.



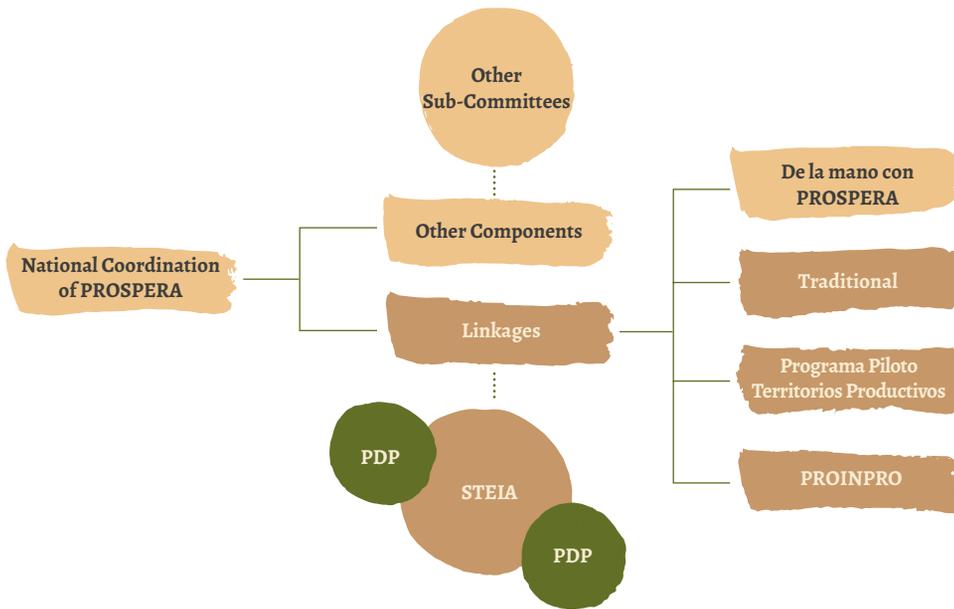
RESULTS OF THE INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS

PROSPERA'S PRODUCTIVE, LABOUR AND FINANCIAL INCLUSION COMPONENT, IN WHICH PROINPRO WAS INSERTED, IS SUPPORTED BY A HIGH-LEVEL STRATEGIC POLITICAL FRAMEWORK. THIS PREVIOUSLY CONSISTED OF THE NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR PRODUCTIVE INCLUSION, WHICH PROVIDED AN OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK BASED ON MECHANISMS OF COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT OFFICES AND ENTITIES. IT WAS EXPLICITLY SUPPORTED BY THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND PUBLIC CREDIT (SHCP), WHICH CHAIRED THE TECHNICAL SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, INCOME AND SAVINGS (STEIA), RESPONSIBLE FOR ENSURING COORDINATION.

In effect, PROSPERA's linkage component consisted of STEIA as its main operational support, which was expected to function as an articulating node between PROSPERA and a set of Productive Development Programmes (PDPs), as indicated in Figure 2. However, it produced limited results. Although it was conceived as representing an opportunity for high-level dialogue and negotiation, it lacked of guiding instruments, such as budget and operational rules. So it progressively lost its convening capacity and ceased to operate with representatives who

had decision-making powers. This meant that it stopped being a space to establish public policy agreements and commitments.

Figure 2
Structure of STEIA – Linkage components



With respect to the framework of STEIA, only declarative commitments were made, which did not translate into effective prioritisation of the PROSPERA beneficiaries by the PDPs, nor into the consequent availability of resources. Thus, of the 17 programmes which PROINPRO was expected to coordinate at the beginning of its operations, it finally ended up obtaining the support of only the two previously described programmes. These poor results obtained by STEIA represented one of the arguments for the early closure of PROINPRO in 2018.

STEIA's failure highlights the need to complement political support with a viable, less sophisticated and timely technical design, which are components that PROSPERA's productive inclusion strategy lacked. This affected the implementation capacity of PROINPRO and the other pilot projects. Among these technical components the most significant were as follows:



As in many conditional income transfer programmes in Latin

America, PROSPERA's education and healthcare components had a budgetary component assigned by the Federation's Expenditure Budget and coordinated their actions one by one with the respective Ministries, thus ensuring the healthcare and educational benefits associated with the transfer package. When the new productive inclusion component was incorporated into the programme, the same design was not adopted, with the consequent lack of incentives for productive development programmes to join the strategy proposed by SEDESOL.



Even though from the beginning of 2015, the productive promotion programmes prioritised in the strategy incorporated a paragraph in their operating rules intended to prioritise the care of PROSPERA families, this did not translate into modifications in their design that would facilitate access for PROSPERA-PROINPRO beneficiaries. Consequently, they had to take part in the respective calls for projects just like any other beneficiary. This paragraph was as follows:

“The Programme must issue specific calls to finance productive and income generation projects, derived from the PROSPERA Social Inclusion Programme’s strategy of productive and labour inclusion; the amount of the resources assigned by the Productive Promotion and Income Generation Programmes required to finance the projects demanded by said strategies, must be agreed by the Technical Subcommittee on Employment, Income and Savings of the National Coordination Committee of the PROSPERA Programa de Inclusión Social, according to the agreed target population”.

Each of the different productive promotion programmes had its own target population, which frequently did not coincide with that of PROSPERA. In a context of high regressivity of the SAGARPA programmes and resource capture by peasant union organizations, there was little or no space to attend to the PROSPERA population, which, also barely met the requirements for participation and access to the productive support packages offered by these programmes.

An additional important element to consider, and which is often absent in this type of analysis, is that of institutional inertia, which in Latin America represents a strong tendency to promote a rationale of sectoral and compartmentalised working practices. In the operational activities of STEIA, such inertia was noted as institutional jealousy on the part of the representatives of the agriculture sector regarding the capacity of the social sector to operate productive projects, as well as the beneficiaries of social programmes to adequately respond to the participation requirements of programmes provided by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (SAGARPA).

Thus, the analysis shows that the **well-placed political positioning of an agenda is not enough, particularly if the proposed policy proposal is outlined in its original design without the clarity**

and coherence required for its implementation. The lack of strategical clarity led to different problems when institutionalising the productive inclusion policy. Likewise, much emphasis was placed on guaranteeing the positioning of the subject on the political agenda, with high-level management and the creation of a collegiate body with the presence of entities with broad convening powers, such as STEIA. However, these “bottom-up” efforts of the policy were not reciprocated “top-down”. The strategies for grounding the high-level mandate were poorly organised, and largely motivated by the urgency to show results in terms of the mobilisation of the stakeholders that formed part of the STEIA framework (Rimisp, 2018).

Although PROINPRO’s operational life was short and uneven, with poor results in terms of financing productive projects, it did contribute to the more or less widespread dissemination of the existence of PDPs, their operating rules, and mechanisms for participation, with respect to a population segment that had previously not known about their existence. Although this aspect can be considered an achievement in itself, this type of intervention generates expectations that, being incomplete, can cause frustration among the target population, especially if an early closure of the project occurs, as happened in this case, without timely reporting to groups of beneficiaries who were actively working on such projects.



RECOMMENDATIONS

From the preceding analysis, three main recommendations emerge. These can guide coordination efforts between the strategic programmes -which are currently implemented by SADER, the Ministry of Welfare and SEDATU, among other entities-, with essential actions for rural development and the reactivation of agriculture, following the COVID-19 crisis in Mexico:

1 The importance of reinforcing the formal aspects of coordination with budgetary mechanisms or other types of incentives that have a binding power and make coordination an obligation for all those called to take part in such a process. This is particularly critical in coordination processes of this type, where public entities with different expertise and backgrounds are called to take part with programmes that have their own objectives, targeting criteria and operating rules, and which came into existence long before the coordination process that has been the objective of this study. The role that FIDA can play in this regard is strategic, strengthening the capacity of entities linked to rural areas to prioritize concerted actions.

This requires involving productive development programmes in the design, joint planning, and coordination of activities, goals, and objectives. STEIA's frustrated implementation experience reveals that high-level political commitment is not enough by itself to ensure successful coordination between different levels of government. Participants must share the responsibility for the success of a given policy. In accordance with principal-agent literature, the incentives of the parties must be clearly identified, and the principal (the one who wants to develop a coordination policy) must contain the elements of a budget, transparency, and execution in order to ensure that the agent (the different public programmes that must adjust their programmes) act in accordance with the defined objectives.

2 In addition to horizontal coordination, **PROINPRO's experience warns us about the need for clear and transparent mechanisms of vertical coordination.** It is not enough to replicate the formal aspects of coordination at the subnational level if the particularities of each territory are not taken into account in terms of institutional capacity, power relations, and political dynamics.

3 The need to adequately assess the possible potential of informal coordination mechanisms in terms of the success or failure of such an initiative. On the one hand, the informal agreements that took place outside STEIA and that were successful to some extent should be assessed, depending on the authorities' commitment to the project, and their willingness and capacity for dialogue with those responsible for the PDPs. On the other hand, forms of conduct deeply rooted in the implementation of Mexican public policies, such as how to open the "small windows of opportunity" for the presentation of productive projects, may call into question the effective execution of a technical design that does not consider the weight of these informal standards. On the contrary, the greater knowledge and relationships that arise in such cases, between technicians, local promoters and public agents in specific territories, has frequently shown a high capacity to help unlock coordination problems that cannot be solved by formal mechanisms designed at the national level.



TECHNICAL SHEET

The Project

Over the past few years, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), together with Universidad de Los Andes and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) have been analysing the potential synergistic effects of interventions on rural households that involve social protection programmes and productive rural development projects. IFAD and the Universidad de Los Andes have implemented this project through the “Conditional Cash Transfers and Rural Development in Latin America” grant (www.sinergiasrurales.info/); and FAO through the project entitled “From Protection to Production: The role of Social Cash Transfers in the Promotion of Economic Development” (PtoP) (www.fao.org/economic/ptop). Some evidence of such synergies and complementarities has been identified, but the evidence has also raised new questions. These inquiries are related to the types of synergies and how to take advantage of them, the correct sequencing of programme rollout, the institutional reforms that need to take place and the political economy behind these options, and thus improve the results of the programmes.

To answer some of these questions, the project entitled “Improving the Coordination between Social Protection and Rural Development Interventions in Developing Countries: Lessons from Latin America and Africa” - which is being developed by Universidad de Los Andes (UNIANDÉS), through its Centre for Economic Development Studies (CEDE), and financed by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) - seeks to gather evidence of the benefits of such coordinated interventions.

The goal of the project is to gather evidence for policymakers and donors of the benefits of the coordinated interventions that could provide inputs regarding the appropriate institutional

and operational design, and enable them to use these inputs as a basis for improving anti-poverty interventions targeted at rural households, thus helping smallholder farmers to take a proactive part in rural transformation.

The main objective of the project is to try to influence governmental institutions related to rural development and social protection (anti-poverty) policies, so they can take advantage of identified synergies between social protection and productive initiatives. The project was implemented in seven countries, three in Latin America and four in Africa.

The evaluation undertaken

The institutional analysis is intended to ascertain the institutional architecture and analyse the levels of coordination between the components of social protection and those of rural productive development, in addition to identifying which were the fundamental processes and sub-processes in the coordination of the programmes, as well as the obstacles and facilitators of institutional mechanisms.

The study used a mixed approach, incorporating primary and secondary information. Design documents, regulations (decrees, operating rules, etc.), the operational guides and activity reports of the different programmes, projects and components studied were also consulted. The external evaluations carried out within the framework of the Mexican Evaluation and Performance System constituted another valuable source of information on public productive and social programmes. In the case of PROINPRO, the agreement between IFAD and PROSPERA was reviewed, as was the project design document, progress reports and reports from project monitoring missions.

With respect to primary information, the early closure of PROINPRO, as well as staffing changes linked to the presidential elections in 2018, prevented

interviews being carried out with certain key informants. This lack of primary information was made up for by reviewing and analysing learning documents and previous reports; by the experience of supporting the design and implementation of the Programa Piloto Territorios Productivos (PPTP); from participation in the construction of PROSPERA's Comprehensive Model

for Productive Inclusion, which was implemented in the second half of 2017; and by the preparation of the PROINPRO Completion Report, commissioned by IFAD.

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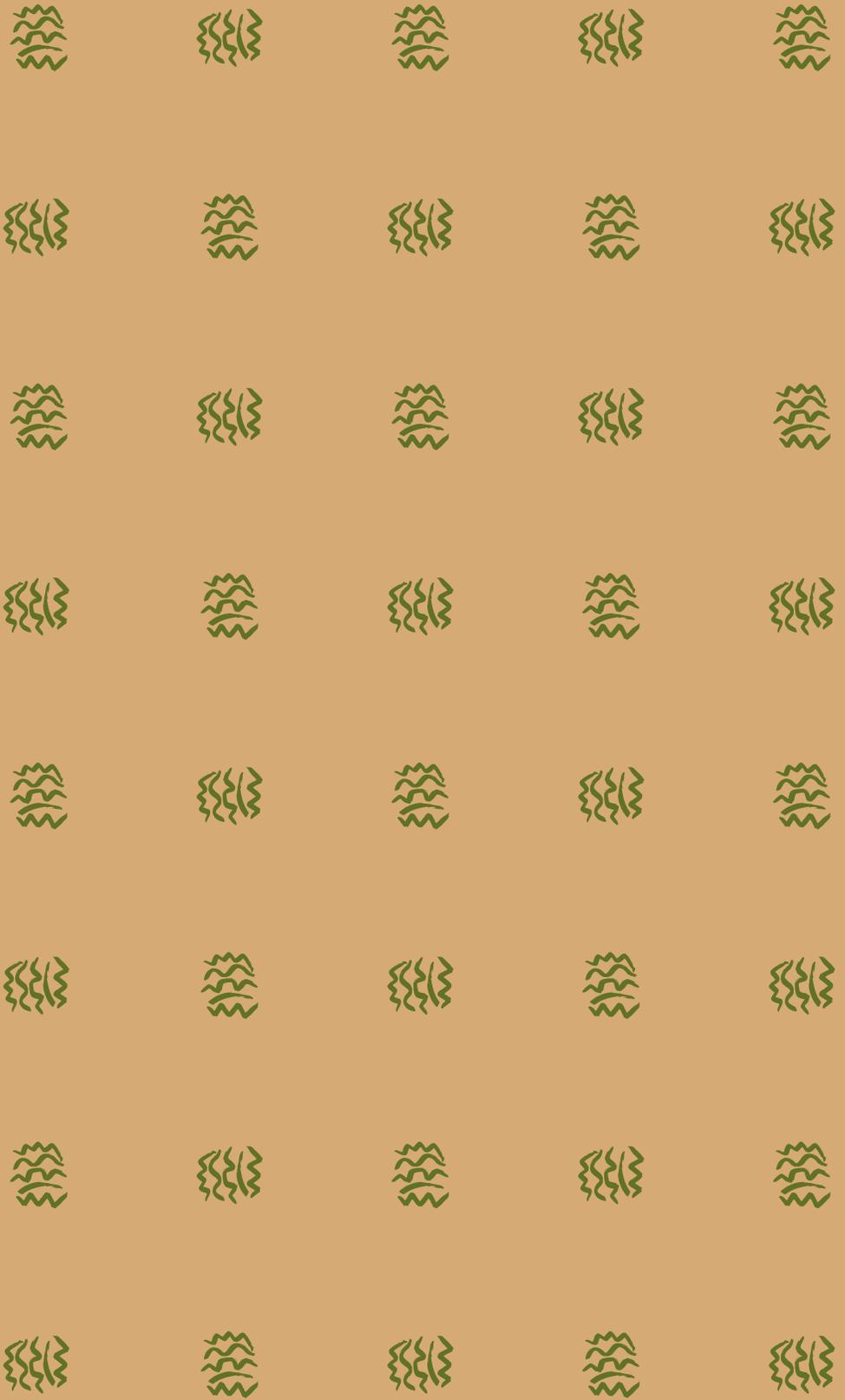
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