Food Security and Social Protection in Sub-Saharan Africa: an Evaluation of Cash Transfer Programs

Giorgio d’Agostino\textsuperscript{1}  Margherita Scarlato \textsuperscript{1}  Luca Pieroni\textsuperscript{2}

\textsuperscript{1}University of Rome III (Italy)

\textsuperscript{2}University of Perugia (Italy)

Between Crisis and Development: Which Role for the Bio-Economy.
AIEAA Conference 2013, Parma, 6-7 June 2013
Introduction:

- The literature on social protection is gradually shifting the focus of interest from purely redistributive actions to active welfare measures that aim to promote capabilities and incentives.

- Emphasis is given to non-transitory effects of social policies targeted to the root of "poverty traps", i.e. social policies able to change the expectations and behaviours of poor people (Barrett, Carter and Ikegami, 2008).

- An even bolder approach refers to changing marginalised individuals’ self-perception by increasing their participation in democratic processes and involvement in the implementation of public policies (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2007; Cook and Kabeer 2009).

- According with this change in the theoretical perspective, a new generation of social protection measures have been implemented throughout the developing and emerging countries.
Aims:

- To analyse the impact of social protection interventions, through cash transfers programs, on food security in a comparative perspective for a sample of Sub-Saharan African countries, for the period 1992-2010.

- To propose an non-experimental evaluation methodology to compare the trajectory of post-intervention food security of treated economies with the trajectory of a combination of similar but untreated economies.

- To assesses the role of cash transfer programs in achieving food security and reducing vulnerability of the poorest segments of the population.
Method:

The empirical analysis is based on a dataset covering 48 sub-Saharan African countries for the period 1992-2010.
Method:

- Abadie and Gardeazabal (2003); Abadie et al. (2010, 2012) propose to use a synthetic control method, which is a weighted combination of potential control countries to approximate the most relevant characteristics linked to food security of the treated country.

- As a measure of food insecurity, we use the estimates of the proportion of population in condition of chronic undernourishment (see Musset 2011 for a review of hunger indices and methods).

An example:

Comparison countries for Ethiopia: Angola (0.434), Burundi (0.151), Comoros (0.380), Uganda (0.035).
Results:

(c) Lesotho

(d) Swaziland

(e) Burkina Faso

(f) Ethiopia
Results:

(g) Ghana

(h) Mali

(i) Malawi

(j) Niger
Results:

(k) Rwanda

(l) Sierra Leone

(m) Zimbabwe
Conclusions:

- We find heterogeneous results which depend on whatever the policy have been implemented in upper-middle income countries or in low-income/fragile states.

- We do not find any significant relationship when these policies have been introduced in high-income countries such as Swaziland or Lesotho, whereas positive and significant impacts have been founded in low-income countries such as Rwanda and Ethiopia as well as in Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe, classified by World Bank as fragile states.
Conclusions:

• A possible explanation for these heterogenous results is linked to the target of these policies - e.g., more/less universal the application of the public scheme for reducing the economic vulnerability, and to administrative issues behind the implementation of these policies.

• Since these policies are commonly introduced to recover natural disasters or famines, the choice is driven by preferences of the donors.
Policy suggestions:

- To drive these policies from external donors to government agencies.
- To choose the population target more accurately.
- To implement long-term cash transfers programs instead of short-term policies to recover natural disasters or famines.