Evaluating antipoverty transfer programmes in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa: Better policies? Better politics?

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Evaluation of antipoverty transfer programmes

The incidence of impact evaluations of antipoverty transfer programmes is more intense than for most other development interventions

...especially human development conditional transfer programmes aka ccts

Why?

A policy/epistemic explanation: evaluations contribute to ‘evidence-based’ policy

Government effectiveness/Aid effectiveness

A politics explanation: evaluations are a tool to overcome political resistance and competition
Research approach

Hypothesis: the incidence of impact evaluations in antipoverty transfer programmes is explained by the degree of political resistance and competition

Examine a dataset of social protection programmes and look for reliable correlations between incidence and variables proxying for the two explanations

Compare the role and scope of impact evaluations in Latin America and Africa
The relationship between evaluation incidence and political resistance

Evaluations as a ‘political tool’

Pierson [1993] When effects become cause: Policy feedback and political change
Findings from impact evaluations can influence support for antipoverty transfer programmes by helping overcome political resistance.

Programme agencies will have stronger incentives to include rigorous evaluation components of antipoverty transfers the greater is the resistance to their introduction/scaling up.

Domestically, resistance depends on policy and political competition and on strategic imperfections in the political process;

If donor involvement – intra- and inter-agency competition and innovation incentives
Correlates of evaluation incidence
A dataset of programmes:

Table 1 Variable description and statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Obs.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any</td>
<td>Whether any evaluation</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donor</td>
<td>Whether involvement by multilaterals or bilaterals</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot</td>
<td>Whether pilot</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nprog</td>
<td>Number of programmes per country</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wbgi_gee</td>
<td>Index of government effectiveness</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>-0.36</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>-1.60</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aid_gdp</td>
<td>DAC assistance to GDP.</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Van_comp</td>
<td>Vanhanen political competition</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>42.8</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chga_demo</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dpi_checks</td>
<td>Number of veto players</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme Type</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditional cash transfer</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment guarantee</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-kind transfer</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-contributory pension</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unconditional cash transfer</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Probit results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Coefficients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Donor = 1</td>
<td>0.76**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot = 1</td>
<td>-0.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nprog</td>
<td>0.26***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aid_gdp&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wbg_i_gee&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0.62**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Van_comp&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>-0.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dpi_checks</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment guarantee</td>
<td>-0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-kind transfer</td>
<td>-1.05**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N-c pension</td>
<td>-1.56***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCT</td>
<td>-1.26***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>constant</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.48)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Programme type (omitted category is cct):

| Employment guarantee          | -0.74        |
|                               | (0.47)       |
| In-kind transfer              | -1.05**      |
|                               | (0.54)       |
| N-c pension                   | -1.56***     |
|                               | (0.36)       |
| UCT                           | -1.26***     |
|                               | (0.33)       |
| constant                      | -0.01        |
|                               | (0.48)       |

Number of observations 143
Pseudo R-2 0.289
LL(0) -98.94
LL = -70.34

Data source: Authors' database and GoQ.

Notes:

<sup>a</sup> See Table 1 for variable definitions.
<sup>b</sup> Robust standard errors in parenthesis.

* Significant at 10%; ** Significant at 5%; *** Significant at 1%.
Comparing practice in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa
Figure 3. Distribution of impact evaluation studies processed
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evolution of antipoverty transfer programmes</th>
<th>Latin America</th>
<th>sub-Saharan Africa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rapid growth; large-scale programmes:</td>
<td>ccts and social pensions but also integrated antipoverty programmes</td>
<td>Slow growth outside southern Africa; pilots southern Africa: unconditional transfers social pensions and child benefits elsewhere: Pilot ucts and ccts; small scale; donor supported and funded; mixed provision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>donor provided initial financing; public provision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political resistance to antipoverty transfers</th>
<th>Latin America</th>
<th>sub-Saharan Africa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong public demand: ‘social debt’</td>
<td>ccts show high evaluation intensity compared to other programmes</td>
<td>excluding southern Africa: virtually no public demand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main resistance from competing programmes and existing agencies</td>
<td>evaluation more likely for donor supported programmes</td>
<td>resistance from political elites ...and from competing agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ccts show high evaluation intensity compared to other programmes</td>
<td></td>
<td>...and from donors focused on emergency aid and food transfers; infrastructure; or on sectoral projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evaluation more likely for donor supported programmes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed capacity among donors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Latin America</td>
<td>sub-Saharan Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experimental evaluation strong</td>
<td>Experimental evaluation is v. limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why?</td>
<td>Innovative programmes: ccts?</td>
<td>Why? Strong political resistance BUT did not lead to strong evaluation:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discretion vs rights?</td>
<td>Donor competition did not initially lead to strong evaluation components… what about Ethiopia and Kenya?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agency competition; no donor competition</td>
<td>Pilots as demonstration; not learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limited partisan competition</td>
<td>Capacity constraints/institutionalisation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How does political resistance play out in the comparison?

Widespread resistance to transfer programmes can explain the intensity of evaluation.

Why is the incidence of evaluation weaker in SSA than in Latin America when resistance is stronger in the latter?

...because of capacity and finance

...because pilots developed for demonstration effects only (politics over policy/epistemic?)

...because pilots were never expected to go to scale

Conditions in SSA mitigated the demand for evaluations in response to political resistance.
Conclusions

The incidence of impact evaluations in antipoverty transfer programmes appears to be associated with policy (evidence-based) and politics (resistance) explanations.

Rigorous evaluations have political feedback effects; antipoverty policies perceived to be effective have greater support and are more sustainable.

Examining correlates of evaluation incidence suggests support for both explanations, or at least, suggests that the politics explanation cannot be ruled out: The incidence of impact evaluations is positively correlated with donor involvement; programme competition; and government effectiveness.

Comparing the evaluation of antipoverty transfer programmes in LAC and SSA reveals some significant differences in the way these explanations interact: in SSA early pilots were used for demonstration purposes; the epistemic gains from evaluations were not given enough attention.

In explaining effective demand for evaluation, we need to pay attention to evidence-based policy stance, but also need to pay attention to politics.