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

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WIDER Working Paper No. 2013/009

Evaluating antipoverty transfer programmes in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa

Better policies? Better politics?

Armando Barrientos and Juan M. Villa*

February 2013

Abstract

The paper provides a comparative analysis of the incidence of evaluation methods in antipoverty transfer programmes in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa. The paper identifies two broad explanations for the incidence of evaluation in antipoverty transfer programmes in developing countries, one emphasizing the advantages of a shift towards evidence-based development policy, and a second explanation emphasizing political factors. The paper assesses their relevance in the context of Latin American and sub-Saharan African countries with a view to throwing light on whether the evaluation of antipoverty transfer programmes will lead to an improved effectiveness of the relevant government agencies.

Keywords: impact evaluation, poverty, antipoverty transfers, Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa

JEL classification: D72, H43, I32, I38

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1 Introduction

The growth of antipoverty transfer programmes in developing countries has been a distinctive feature of development policy and practice in the last decade. Programmes providing direct transfers in cash and in-kind to households in poverty have sprung up in all developing regions, first in middle-income countries but more recently spreading to low-income countries. Combined with policies enhancing growth and supporting the provision of basic services, antipoverty transfer programmes have the capacity to make a significant contribution to the global reduction of poverty and vulnerability. Knowledge of the impact of antipoverty transfer programmes is largely based on the findings from experimental and quasi-experimental evaluations, which cover a good proportion of antipoverty transfer programmes. The use of impact evaluation, uneven such as it is, singles out cash transfer programmes among development interventions.¹ Two broad explanations are put forward to account for the relatively more intensive use of impact evaluation in antipoverty transfer programmes. One explanation emphasizes technical factors, as part of a shift towards evidence-based development policy (Banerjee and Duflo 2011). A second explanation emphasizes political factors, the need to persuade reluctant policy makers and electorates of the benefits of effective antipoverty transfers (Levy 2006). The main aim of this paper is to assess these explanations with a view to shedding light on whether the evaluation of antipoverty transfer programmes will lead to an improved effectiveness of the relevant government agencies and/or strengthen their political sustainability.

There is a strong technical case for supporting rigorous monitoring and evaluation of antipoverty interventions, and indeed all public policy. Most countries have set in place rigorous licensing of food and pharmaceutical products precisely in order to protect the population from potential damaging effects. Antipoverty transfer programmes can have commensurate effects on the treated population, at the very least. Government agencies responsible for antipoverty efforts have a duty to ensure that programmes are effective, are based on existing knowledge, and have established processes to learn lessons from their implementation. Monitoring and evaluation processes are essential to test innovative programmes or programme features. In countries with low capacity, monitoring and evaluation processes are an important tool to develop implementation capacity and to enable dynamic adaptation of programmes to changing environmental conditions. Monitoring and evaluation are essential instruments for improving government effectiveness. The technical case for evaluations is strong but account must be taken of associated costs and methodological challenges. There are costs attached to over-randomization (Barrett and Carter 2010), and it is feasible to consider conditions in which experimental evaluation of antipoverty transfers programmes might not be appropriate.²

In the context of antipoverty transfer programmes, monitoring and evaluation processes also have a political role. Rigorous programme evaluation findings could help overcome opposition to antipoverty transfer programmes. In countries where elites are resistant to their introduction and scaling up, as has been the case in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa

¹ Pritchett discusses how the internal politics in multilaterals might help explain the scarcity of rigorous programme evaluation in international development (Pritchett 2002).

² Chile's *Chile Solidario* was reformed in 2012 by a new right-of-centre administration in part because of mixed evaluation findings. This innovative multidimensional integrated antipoverty programme was evaluated as if it was a conditional cash transfer programme, which it was not.

(SSA), impact evaluation findings can have powerful demonstration effects. Opposition to antipoverty transfer programmes can come from many quarters, including from agencies involved with competing development programmes; from interests groups seeking to protect their position and influence within government; from politicians keen to use public policy as a means to strengthen electoral support through sub-national governments seeking to prevent the centralization of power. Well-designed impact evaluations can provide crucial ammunition to those advocating antipoverty transfer programmes, help to undermine the case of those opposing them, and facilitate their adoption. If antipoverty transfer programmes are already in place, programme agencies may seek to use impact evaluations as a means of protecting themselves from day to day interference from politicians and bureaucrats; and in the medium term they can be used as a means to strengthen their sustainability by firming up public perceptions on the effectiveness of programmes.

The approach we adopt is to map out the contrasting experiences of Latin America and SSA. Appendix 1 provides summary information on impact evaluations of antipoverty transfer programmes in Latin America and SSA. In Latin America, the rapid spread of human development conditional transfer programmes—also known in international policy debates as conditional cash transfer programmes—has been facilitated by the rigorous impact evaluation protocols implemented in Mexico’s *Progresa/Oportunidades*, and the findings thus generated (Fiszbein and Schady 2009; Rawlings and Rubio 2005). In SSA, on the other hand, the spread of antipoverty transfer programmes has been slowed down, arguably, by the limitations of monitoring and evaluation processes (Garcia and Moore 2012). The limited use of impact evaluations in SSA is due to well-known capacity and resource constraints, but also to the reluctance of local elites to embrace this agenda (Niño-Zarazúa et al. 2012). Pilot cash transfer programmes have been pushed by foreign donors in this region with an eye on their demonstration effects, but this orientation and purpose have meant that monitoring and evaluation processes did not figure prominently in their design and implementation. In Latin America, the main political role of evaluation processes has been to protect programmes from partisan politics and the threat of clientelism (Levy 2006). Examining the contrasting experiences of SSA and Latin America will help to extract general lessons for developing countries.

The structure of the paper is as follows: section 2 provides a brief discussion of experimental and quasi-experimental evaluation methods and their import for antipoverty transfer programmes. Section 3 provides a framework for assessing the political feedback effects of evaluation processes also in the context of antipoverty transfer programmes. Section 4 examines the experience of Latin American countries, while section 5 focuses on SSA. The final section draws out the main conclusions.

2 Experimental and quasi-experimental evaluation of antipoverty programmes

This section provides a brief review of approaches to the evaluation of antipoverty transfers.³ Impact evaluation studies are employed to assess the effectiveness of these interventions and can also be used as a technical tool to inform decisions on further adjustments or scaling up. The main challenge is to attribute with confidence the changes in poverty to participation in the programmes (Ravallion 2005). To do this successfully we need a counterfactual, that is

³ For a more detailed discussion see the other studies prepared under the ReCom research initiative.

we need to know *what would have happened to poverty in the absence of the programme* (Gertler et al. 2010). However, it is not possible to observe and compare poverty outcomes for a particular individual or household with and without participation in the programme. Instead, it is feasible to compare the outcomes of the programme for a treated or participating group and the same outcomes for a non-participating or control group. The methods used to select individuals into the programme can be a powerful confounder, as they rely on systematic differences in the initial characteristics of the two groups. In an experimental context, random assignment guarantees that differences in outcomes are not affected by assignment to the programme. In an experimental setting, the outcomes of the intervention are independent from the assignment rules (Duflo, Glennerster, and Kremer 2006). Experimental evaluations enable difference in difference estimators which compare changes in outcomes across treatment and controls groups from a baseline (Angrist and Pischke 2008).

In the context of antipoverty transfers, randomization is problematic and could strengthen opposition to the programme by political and social actors (Coady 2004). There are valid ethical concerns attached to preventing groups in poverty from benefiting from the programme. Alternatives to the experimental setting are desirable. Evaluations can be done by using observational or quasi-experimental data.

The most popular approaches rely on matching techniques, instrumental variables, and regression discontinuity designs (Imbens and Wooldridge 2009).⁴ Propensity score matching methods select a counterfactual group based on observable characteristics defining their probability of participation in the programme at the baseline. Differences in outcomes between participants and matched non-participants are attributed to the intervention (Rosenbaum and Rubin 1983). Instrumental variable design is used to mitigate the selection bias of a non-random assignment by using a two-stage procedure. In the first stage, participation in the programme is predicted by another variable, the instrument, which is correlated with participation but uncorrelated with the potential outcome. At a second stage, participation probabilities are used to estimate treatment effects from the programme. Regression discontinuity relies on the identification of a fixed cut-off point on a continuous variable supporting assignment to a programme (Imbens and Lemieux 2008). Typically non-contributory pensions, where there is a specified age of entitlement, enable observation of this cut-off point. Differences in the outcome variable around the cut-off can be attributed to the programme.

3 The political economy of programme evaluation

The incidence of programme evaluation can also be explained by politics and political economy factors. The relative effectiveness of interventions and the perceptions of effectiveness among the general public and political elites could have implications for their adoption and sustainability. Measures of effectiveness provided by programme evaluations can therefore influence public opinion and political support for the programmes (Graham 2002; Lindert and Vinscensini 2008). Several actors are important in this context: programme agencies and their preferences towards evaluation, multilateral donors engaged in poverty reduction in developing countries, bilateral donors and the voters and taxpayers they

⁴ Ravallion (2005) provides a summary of evaluation methods.

represent, domestic political parties, and constituencies and their preferences towards redistribution and poverty reduction. In this section we sketch out some propositions on the positioning of these actors in relation to programme evaluation. These propositions will help organize the assessment of explanations for the incidence of antipoverty transfer programme evaluations in SSA and Latin America in the following sections.

We hypothesize that programme agencies will have stronger incentives to include rigorous programme evaluation, that is, evaluation using experimental or quasi-experimental impact evaluation, the greater the resistance to antipoverty transfer programmes among the different actors involved (Levy 2006; Niño-Zarazúa et al. 2012). Resistance might come from at least two sources. First, it might come from competing programmes agencies vying for limited budgets. In this case, programme evaluation will be more likely the greater the competitiveness of the policy environment. Measures of the number of programmes and agencies involved could serve as a means of identifying policy competition. Second, resistance to antipoverty transfer programmes might come from strategic imperfections of political processes. To the extent that the introduction of antipoverty transfer programmes could lead to, or require, rules-based resource allocation and/or greater openness and accountability, these programmes will attract opposition from elites benefiting from discretionary and/or closed decision processes. In this case, programme agencies will have a stronger preference for rigorous programme evaluation the more closed and discretionary the decision-making processes are.

Preferences for programme evaluation among multilateral donor agencies could be driven by two main factors: the degree of policy competition within the respective agencies and the incentives for policy innovation embedded in their management structures (Pritchett 2002). Policy competition within donor agencies makes rigorous programme evaluation an important tool to secure resources and influence. We can hypothesize that rigorous programme evaluation will be more likely in conditions of stronger policy competition and weaker incentives for innovation within multilateral agencies. The point about policy competition extends to contexts in which several multilaterals operate side by side. Multilaterals often have differences in objectives, capacities, and influence. In the context of antipoverty transfers, these differences play in support for specific target groups and policy instruments; for example, the extent to which antipoverty transfers should focus on children, or whether conditions are appropriate. In aid dependent countries in SSA, donor influence and donor competition have been important in facilitating or constraining programme evaluation (Devereux and White 2010; Niño-Zarazúa et al. 2012). These two determinants of preferences for programme evaluation also apply to bilaterals. Internal policy competition and incentives for innovation could be powerful drivers of programme evaluation. One additional point is important in the context of bilateral donors: the influence of political accountability to politicians and taxpayers in the donor country will, other things being equal, encourage evidence-based policy and by extension programme evaluation. Public attitudes to international aid in donor countries strongly influence the quantity and orientation of foreign aid (Chong and Gradstein 2006; World Bank 1998).

In recipient countries, public perceptions regarding the effectiveness of antipoverty transfer programmes are important in aligning public and political support for programmes, especially from voters and taxpayers. To an extent, public perceptions are shaped by outcome and process indicators (Lindert and Vinscensini 2008). Rigorous programme evaluations provide important inputs into the process of shaping public perceptions and especially the perceptions of elites. This leads to the hypothesis that programme evaluations will be more likely the

greater the predicted opposition to antipoverty transfer programmes. This is particularly important in the context of financial crises which place additional pressures on government spending.

This brief discussion provides some pointers on the politics and political economy of programme evaluation. The discussion also indicates that programme evaluation is likely to have feedback effects upon the political and policy environment, in addition to implications for government effectiveness.

4 Evaluation of antipoverty transfers in Latin America

An important contribution of the recent expansion of antipoverty transfers in Latin America to the global drive to reduce poverty is the application of experimental methods of programme evaluation. This section discusses explanations for the use of programme evaluation in the region.

The evaluation of Mexico's *Progresa/Oportunidades* has acquired a paradigmatic status in the evaluation of antipoverty transfer programmes. In advance of the introduction of *Progresa/Oportunidades* in 1997, the Mexican government commissioned the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) to design and implement the evaluation of the programme (Skoufias 2005). The selection of *Progresa/Oportunidades* participants was done in three stages. First an index of marginalization identified the communities with the highest levels of deprivation in seven states. *Progresa* was initially implemented only in rural areas of these seven states, and was restricted to communities with less than 2,500 inhabitants. Second, a census in rural areas provided information on the socioeconomic status of households in these communities enabling a ranking of households. Third, community validation provided a check on the households selected for participation and led to the inclusion of additional households. Administrative constraints meant that the programme was rolled out in 1998 in a majority of the selected communities, but some were left for a later date. These constraints created conditions approximating an experimental setting. They enabled the identification of a treatment group of communities incorporated into the programme in 1998 and a control group incorporated by the end of 2000.⁵ Difference in differences estimates of impact provided strong evidence of the positive effects of *Progresa/Oportunidades* on participant households. This impact evaluation set a standard for other antipoverty programmes in the region, and elsewhere.

The *Progresa* model can be contrasted with the other large-scale flagship programme in Latin America, such as Brazil's *Bolsa Escola*. *Bolsa Escola* emerged from municipal policy innovation in 1995 in three municipalities. The key insight supporting innovation was the view that for antipoverty transfers to have an impact on poverty, it was necessary to combine transfers in cash with conditions in children's schooling. In 2007, the federal government offered counterpart funding in an effort to extend the programme to poorer municipalities facing resource limitations. In 2001, *Bolsa Escola* became a federal programme and in 2003 it was consolidated into *Bolsa Familia* integrating four other cash transfer programmes including the Programme for the Eradication of Child Labour (PETI) initiated in 1996.

⁵ Comparisons of the treatment and control groups of communities confirmed the absence of significant bias or contamination (Behrman and Todd 1999).

Research into *Bolsa Escola* at the sub-national level found positive impacts. Research into PETI supported by multilaterals also found strong positive effects (Yap, Sedlacek and Orazem 2002). The Brazilian Audit Court (2003) examined PETI and provided a strongly supportive evaluation of the programme. The evolution of *Bolsa Escola* and its consolidation into *Bolsa Familia* was not dependent on the results of impact evaluation studies.⁶ Support for the effectiveness of the programme came from independent research. Political opposition to *Bolsa Escola* and PETI was very limited, and there was broad support among Brazilian politicians for the use of direct transfers as a means of addressing poverty. There was wide and strong support for *Bolsa Familia* within the governing coalition and public perceptions of the programme associated it with President Lula.

Evaluation protocols in later antipoverty transfers in Latin America provide yet another contrast with *Progres/Oportunidades*. A good example is *Juventud y Empleo* (Youth and Employment) in the Dominican Republic. The programme is aimed at increasing the productivity of youths in poverty by providing job training and a cash stipend during the course and internship. Its evaluation protocols involve experimental methods through the random selection of participants. For each group of 35 applicants, 20 are randomly assigned to the treatment group and the rest to the control group. Assessment with baseline data confirmed that the two resulting groups showed no statistically significant differences in the individual characteristics of respondents. The experimental setting ensured that difference in outcomes across the two groups could be attributed to the programme (Card et al. 2011).

Despite the prominence of experimental methods, impact evaluations relying on observational data are also common in the region. Borraz and González (2009) employ propensity score matching methods to evaluate Uruguay's *Ingreso Ciudadano* (Citizenship Income). This antipoverty transfer programme was introduced in 2005 and was influenced by Brazil's *Bolsa Familia* and Mexico's *Oportunidades*. It did not include an evaluation component as part of the implementation of the intervention, so the authors used secondary information from available household survey data and detected positive effects on human capital formation. Based on this observed data, the propensity score matching method allowed them to compare the treatment or participant group to a comparison or non-participant group. Participants and non-participants were matched according to their probability of participation in the programme. The *Ingreso Ciudadano* was phased out in 2007 and replaced by other interventions.

Soares and Britto (2007) use administrative data to evaluate Paraguay's *Tekoporá*, an integrated anti-poverty social transfer. They compiled baseline information on beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries and later administered a follow-up survey to support quasi-experimental difference in difference estimates of impact. Similarly, Levy and Ohls (2010) evaluate the PATH social transfer in Jamaica using a regression discontinuity design. The evaluation relied on the discontinuity in eligibility scores and information from follow-up surveys. Finally, Attanasio et al. (2010) evaluate the impact of public nursery programme in Colombia operating since the 1980s, by relying on instrumental variable estimation to assess nutritional effects on participant children.

These examples suggest competing explanations for the use of impact evaluations in Latin America. The paradigmatic case of Mexico's *Progres* shows the use of impact evaluations

⁶ An evaluation of *Bolsa Familia* by a consortium including IFPRI collected the first round of data only in 2005.

to address opposition to innovation from competing agencies, and in a context of budgetary restriction. There is strong evidence of the demonstration effects of impact evaluations. The evaluation findings from Mexico's *Progresa* were a significant influence in the decision to extend the programme nationwide and to urban areas by the incoming Fox administration in Mexico in 2000. The finding from the evaluation of *Progresa* also influenced efforts in other countries. The document approving a loan for US\$211 million in 2000 for Colombia's *Familias en Acción* by the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank noted that 'Programmes with conditional subsidy grant mechanisms similar to the one proposed here have been carried out in other countries of the region (Mexico, Honduras and Brazil), and have been evaluated as among the most successful social programmes' (IADB 2000: 38). There is also direct evidence of the influence of multilaterals in the adoption of impact evaluations. An impact assessment of Colombia's *Familias en Acción* was included as one of the conditions for the loan, replicating *Progresa*'s approach. According to Attanasio et al. (2005), the initial restriction of the operation of the programme to no more than 200 out of the 1100 municipalities in Colombia allowed the selection of 'control' municipalities in a quasi-experimental impact evaluation. The influence of multilaterals has been important in using the results from evaluations in successful programme to justify their adoption elsewhere. Guatemala's *Mi Familia Progresa*, the Dominican Republic's *Solidaridad* are also examples of evidence based policy diffusion.

The presence of a successful impact evaluation and the influence of multilaterals could prove insufficient to guarantee the sustainability of a programme. In Nicaragua, an incoming government decided to phase out *Red de Protección Social* in spite of the positive outcomes of its impact evaluation and the support of multilaterals (Maluccio and Flores 2005).

Issues with the appropriateness of evaluations have been raised by the evaluation of Chile's *Chile Solidario* and the subsequent decision by the government to replace it. *Chile Solidario* was a multidimensional antipoverty poverty programme aimed at overcoming social exclusion among households in extreme poverty. The programme was designed to provide participant households with a personal social worker who ensured access to all existing public programmes addressing poverty, including transfers. The evaluation studies of *Chile Solidario* followed impact evaluations methods with observational data and identified comparison groups through, inter alia, propensity score matching techniques (Galasso 2006, 2011; Guardia, Hojman and Larrañaga 2011). The effects identified pointed to marginal improvements. The difficulty is that, given the design of the programme, participant households differed from the equivalent non-participating households only in having had access to intermediation but not in programme entitlements. Non-participants were also entitled to the range of cash and in kind transfers. Despite this, key features of *Chile Solidario* have been reproduced in other programmes, including Paraguay's *Tekoporá* and Colombia's *Red Unidos*.

Political and political economy factors have contributed in significant ways to the inclusion of impact evaluations of antipoverty transfers in Latin America. The attention to rigorous evaluations processes in Mexico's *Progresa/Oportunidades* was motivated by the context in which the programme was designed and implemented (Levy 2006). The ongoing financial crisis meant that *Progresa/Oportunidades* needed to be financed through switching expenditure from other programmes. Alongside this, there was opposition from policy and government constituencies associated with existing antipoverty programmes. Political interference with antipoverty programmes and clientelism have seriously undermined their effectiveness. Proponents of *Progresa/Oportunidades* hoped to rely on evaluation processes

to protect the programme from opposition within the government and also to protect it from interference. To an important extent, rigorous evaluation of antipoverty transfer programmes in Latin America is positively associated with the strength of opposition to the programme. Argentina's *Asignación Familiar Unica por Hijo* is another example of a transfer programme with strong evaluation processes and also facing strong opposition from competing programme and policy and political constituencies.

Brazil's *Bolsa Familia*, on the other hand, did not face strong opposition within government and the organic extension of the programme across municipalities ensured a degree of political support, and the absence of opposition. In fact the introduction of other antipoverty transfer programmes in the early 2000s was in recognition both of their effectiveness and the degree of political support they enjoyed. The absence of strong opposition could have contributed to a relative neglect in setting up rigorous evaluations of the different transfer programmes later to be consolidated into *Bolsa Familia*.

In Latin America, categorical antipoverty transfer programmes, non-contributory pensions and disability transfers to people in poverty in particular, have not been adequately evaluated. Several factors can explain this. These programmes are rarely supported by donor funds, they are sanctioned by legislation before their implementation, and there are fewer implications for work incentives thereby attracting less critical attention from voters and taxpayers. To the extent that individuals are eligible through personal characteristics like age, there is less discretion on the part of programme agencies. In fact, where categorical programmes are part of broader social assistance schemes, as was the case in Chile's *PASIS*, they are more likely to be monitored for effectiveness.⁷ Another relevant factor is that categorical transfer programmes were designed to compensate groups for their limited work capacity and lacked specific objectives. Often, their grounding in social or citizenship rights precluded the need to evaluate their outcomes.

In sum, an examination of evaluation practices in Latin America supports several of the hypotheses introduced earlier. Stronger evaluation reflects, inter alia, opposition from policy and political constituencies, competition for resources with established programmes, the presence of donor agencies, and the extent of discretion in implementation.

5 Pilots and evaluation practice in sub-Saharan Africa

In contrast to conditions in Latin America, antipoverty transfer programmes in SSA have progressed at a much slower pace. Historically South Africa and Namibia have relied on transfers in cash as a means of addressing poverty and vulnerability (Lund 2008; van der Berg 1997). Over time, social assistance grants have expanded in their reach and by 2010 one in every two households in South Africa had at least one member in receipt of a transfer. More recently, Lesotho has introduced antipoverty transfer programmes for older people and children along similar lines as in South Africa and Namibia, and Swaziland has introduced a social pension programme. Southern African countries are unique in SSA in having established large-scale antipoverty transfer programmes.

⁷ Chile's *PASIS* was a social assistance transfer to older people in extreme poverty. It had a fixed budget to ensure it did not expand.

The situation is substantively different in other sub-regions. There, antipoverty transfer programmes remain limited in scale, scope and institutionalization (Garcia and Moore 2012; Niño-Zarazúa et al. 2012). With few exceptions, they consist of pilot transfer programmes, heavily dependent on donors' financial support and technical assistance. In East Africa, an exception is Ethiopia's *Productive Safety Net Programme*, providing guaranteed employment in food insecurity areas and direct transfers to households without members of working age. It currently reaches around 11 per cent of the population. Kenya's *Orphans and Vulnerable Children Programme* reaches around 100,000 households. Mozambique's *Food Subsidy Programme* has been in existence in different forms since 1991. It currently reaches around 125,000 households with older people and people with disabilities in acute poverty. Zambia, Malawi, Tanzania, and more recently Uganda and Rwanda have introduced pilot social transfer programmes. In west and central Africa, several countries are introducing social transfer programmes on a very small scale. Ghana's *Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty Programme* reaches less than 30,000 households, and Nigeria's *In Care of the Poor Programme* was intended to reach 1,000 households in 12 districts, in a country of 160 million and with high poverty incidence. The route to establishing large-scale antipoverty transfers in SSA is considerably more difficult than in Latin America.

There are several explanations for the relatively slow progress of antipoverty transfer programmes in Africa when compared to Latin America.⁸ The incidence of poverty is significantly greater than in Latin America, and resources to address it are more limited. Of particular interest in the context of this paper are constraints deriving from the political and policy environment.

Donors have played an important role in the expansion of antipoverty transfers in SSA. Their involvement in encouraging the adoption of social transfers, providing financial support, supplementing delivery capacity within public agencies, and influencing programme design and implementation, has been studied in some detail (Beales and German 2006; Devereux and White 2010; Niño-Zarazúa et al. 2012). Donors have supported policy diffusion from antipoverty transfer programmes in Latin America, particularly human development conditional transfer programmes. Leaving South Africa and Namibia aside, the difference is that in SSA they have led, whereas in Latin America they have followed.⁹

In SSA, multilaterals and bilaterals have a strong motivation for pushing antipoverty transfers. By the 1990s, repeated and regular food crises in eastern Africa had transformed emergency food aid into a regular feature. The case for replacing annual rounds of emergency assistance with regular forms of support for food insecure households was obvious to donors and researchers (Barrett and Maxwell 2005). Social transfers provided an attractive, and likely more effective, option (DFID 2005). In highly indebted and aid dependent countries, poverty reduction strategy processes provided a forum in which social transfers could be inserted within national policy discussions and pushed by donors.

Variation in the quality of donor harmonization across these countries has influenced the process of adoption of new policies, which in part explains variations in antipoverty transfer

⁸ Arguably, the pace of progress in Africa could look different if the origins of the largest human development transfer programmes in Latin America are acknowledged. *Bolsa Escola* began in a handful of municipalities in Brazil in 1995 and became a national programme only in 2001.

⁹ In Paraguay and Central American countries, international donors have had a stronger role (Barrientos and Santibañez 2009).

programme design and scale. In the context of SSA, the hypothesis that donor competition would make evaluation more likely does not apply without further modification. In fact, in countries with strong competition across multilaterals and bilaterals, the evaluation of antipoverty transfer programmes has been limited. To understand this apparent disjunction, it is important to pay attention to the interaction of government and donors. Competition among donors in a context of government resistance to antipoverty transfer programmes has contributed to a rush to implementation. Resistance and delays in getting government approval for the implementation of pilot programmes have often forced donors to seek to implement pilot programmes before collecting baseline data or setting in place rigorous evaluation protocols. As a consequence most first-generation pilot transfer programmes in SSA lacked rigorous evaluation procedures.¹⁰ The fact that pilot programmes lack the very tools needed to generate knowledge on their feasibility and effectiveness is regrettable.¹¹ Most importantly for the purposes of this paper, a focus on pilot programmes as ‘demonstration’ tools effectively lifts pressure on programme agencies to include rigorous evaluation protocols in the design and implementation of antipoverty transfer programmes.

Several factors explain the resistance from domestic elites to direct transfers in cash as a means to reduce poverty. The pervasiveness of food aid as the principal source of support for food insecure households encouraged clientelistic forms of politics and strong interest groups (Munemo 2007). These groups were naturally opposed to direct transfers in cash. Resistance to social transfers has been strong among finance ministers in the region, for arguably sensible reasons. Donors generally commit financial support for the start-up of social transfer programmes but are reluctant to commit to the medium- and longer-term needs of these programmes, given current aid modalities. This imposes a large measure of uncertainty over the longer-term financial sustainability of antipoverty transfers. Domestic political elites are also concerned with electoral ratchet effects on the scale of programmes. Even if the transfers were to be limited to a fraction of households in extreme poverty, electoral cycles are likely to generate pressures to extend the support to other groups.¹² In low-income countries where a significant proportion of the population, if not a majority, are in poverty or perceive themselves to be in poverty, voters are bound to exercise electoral pressure on their representatives to extend transfers to them with obvious implications for the longer-term financial sustainability of the programmes. There is also a widely-shared view among elites in SSA that transfers will generate dependency, and cash transfers may encourage corruption.¹³ Sub-national disparities and patrimonial politics also militate against accepting rule-based transfer programmes. In addition, elite perceptions of the strength of informal assistance share a greatly exaggerated assessment the strength of these networks. These factors are important in explaining resistance to direct transfer in cash as a means of addressing poverty, but the list is not exhaustive.

¹⁰ Adequacy can be measured in terms of the presence or absence of a baseline, the quality of the data collected, and the expertise and experience of the teams performing the evaluations.

¹¹ Second-generation pilot programmes are paying more attention to impact evaluation. See the Protection to Production initiative website at SSAwww.fao.org/economic/PtoP/en/.

¹² Preferences for social pensions among SSA governments can be explained in part because the associated financial liabilities can be calculated with some precision, and also because civil servants themselves are uncertain of their pension entitlements.

¹³ Interestingly, this view might be a reflection of aid dependency but also a sense that, given donors’ commitments to poverty reduction, domestic resources might well be applied elsewhere.

The standoff between the donors' push for the adoption of direct transfer in cash as an alternative to food aid on the one hand, and the domestic elites' resistance to them on the other has been resolved in several countries through the implementation of pilot projects. Pilot projects enable donors and domestic agencies to experiment with new forms of delivering aid, while limiting their implementation to localized areas. Pilot projects should in principle help provide information on whether transfer programmes have been designed and implemented correctly, and also provide necessary learning and training for the relevant agencies. Pilots facilitate an effective scaling up of programmes, and are an important component of evaluation processes.

In practice, pilots have seldom incorporated strong evaluation procedures in SSA (Davis et al. 2012). This can be explained by the fact that donors have been more focused on using pilot programmes as a tool to engage and persuade domestic political elites, and their own colleagues in multilaterals and bilateral organizations, of the advantages of transfer programmes, than as a means to assess their effectiveness in possibly adverse conditions. The crucial point is that pilot programmes were not designed with the expectation that they would be scaled up, as was the case in most Latin American countries. Pilots have been used largely as 'demonstration' devices, as a means to gain commitment for them from reluctant elites. Pilots, in the main, have had a political function.¹⁴ These demonstration effects were also intended to work within the relevant multilateral and bilateral donor agencies, many of which lacked a strong evaluation ethos (Pritchett 2002). Many programmes in SSA have been implemented by commissioned non-government agencies with an interest in ensuring control over the perceived outcomes of the programmes.

Garcia and Moore find that only a minority of transfer programmes in SSA have any evaluation components (Garcia and Moore 2012). Of those that do, they find in a sample of SSA transfer programmes, that experimental evaluation is much more common among conditional transfer programmes than among unconditional programmes. This is partly because the design and potential outcomes of conditional transfer programmes are contested.

In some countries the designers of antipoverty transfer programmes paid closer attention to evaluation, but it is hard to generalize from their experience. Ethiopia's *Productive Safety Net* Programme included stronger evaluation components, including the participation of IFPRI in the design and analysis of it (Gilligan, Hoddinott and Seyoum Taffesse 2008; Gilligan et al. 2007). This is in part explained by the resistance of domestic elites to competing policy advice from multilaterals and bilaterals. Donor harmonization paved the way for government commitment to the implementation of the programme, and is to an important extent responsible for the attention paid to evaluation in this case. Kenya's *Orphans and Vulnerable Children* Programme also includes a strong evaluation component, implemented by an external consultancy firm Oxford Policy Management. In this case, donor competition, especially as regards the design of the programme, is likely the factor responsible for the attention to evaluation. Disagreements between donors and the government in the case of Ethiopia and disagreements among donors in Kenya appear to have encouraged attention to evaluation protocols.¹⁵ The political processes involved have affected the implementation of evaluation protocols. In both cases, the absence of baseline data has generated uncertainty

¹⁴ Garcia and Moore (2012) argue that pilot programmes can in theory address both political and technical issues.

¹⁵ The World Bank participated in both.

over the findings from the evaluations. At any rate, it is unclear whether these evaluations have had any significant feedback effects.¹⁶ In Ethiopia, the evaluation findings were mixed and the government is engaged in a review of the programme. In Kenya, the government pushed ahead with the scaling up of the programme before the evaluation was fully completed.

More recent programmes have paid more attention to evaluation, although this is some way away from the kind of experimental evaluation implemented in Mexico's *Progres/Oportunidades*. The findings from these evaluations are beginning to emerge in the public domain.¹⁷

As it was the case with the discussion on Latin America in the previous section, competing explanations for the incidence and quality of antipoverty programme evaluation exist in SSA. Overall, the evaluation of antipoverty transfers in SSA has been weaker and less successful. This is intriguing because the political and policy environment is such that evaluation could have played an important role. The influence of donors and competition among donors have not led to rigorous evaluation of antipoverty transfers in the region. Reluctance by domestic political elites to embrace antipoverty transfer programmes again would have signalled a strong role of impact evaluations. The nature of the interactions between donors and domestic political elites could help explain why rigorous evaluations of antipoverty transfer programmes are hard to find in SSA. This interaction generated pressures for donors to rush to implementation, with insufficient attention paid to evaluation protocols. Donors have focused on pilots mainly for their demonstration effects, and paid limited attention to their capacity to generate knowledge on effectiveness. Weaknesses in the implementation of impact evaluations have limited their role in supporting their sustainability and resilience to political processes. The fact that pilots were highly localized and were not embedded in government structures and domestic politics effectively lifted the incentives for rigorous evaluation which would have been predicted under conditions of agency competition and political opposition.

6 Conclusions

The paper has undertaken a comparative analysis of evaluation practices in antipoverty transfer programmes in Latin America and SSA. A strong focus on rigorous evaluation has been a feature of the recent growth of antipoverty transfer programmes in developing countries. Experimental (and to some degree quasi-experimental) methods are widely perceived as a 'gold standard' in the evaluation of antipoverty transfer programmes in developing countries. The evaluation protocols followed by the designers of Mexico's *Progres* have been hugely influential in the rest of Latin America, and elsewhere.

What explains the incidence of rigorous programme evaluation in the context of antipoverty transfers? The paper identified and discussed two broad explanations: one emphasizes technical factors in the context of a shift to evidence-based international development policy; the second emphasizes political factors, and especially a perceived need to address opposition to the introduction or scaling up of antipoverty transfer programmes. The paper discussed the

¹⁶ In both cases the first round of data collection took place after the programme had been implemented,

¹⁷ See footnote 11.

relevance of these two broad explanations for the incidence of evaluation in the context of Latin America and SSA. The analysis suggests that both technical and political factors are relevant. It also suggested the interaction of these two factors can help explain regional differences in the scope and quality of evaluations. In Latin America technical capacities and opposition to antipoverty transfers explain the incidence of programme evaluation, for example the contrasting attention to programme evaluation in antipoverty transfer programmes in Mexico and Brazil. In SSA, opposition to antipoverty transfers and competition among domestic and international agencies would have signalled greater attention to evaluation in programmes design and implementation, but a focus on pilots undermined pressures for rigorous programme evaluation.

Monitoring and evaluation protocols are crucial to facilitate improvements in government effectiveness. An important insight contributed by this paper is that, at least in the context of antipoverty policy, political factors have a strong influence on the incidence and quality of evaluation processes and on the extent to which their findings influence policy stakeholders. Experimental and quasi-experimental programme evaluation of antipoverty transfer programmes has influenced government agencies' effectiveness, but this influence is strongly intermediated by political conditions.

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Appendix 1: Selected social transfer programmes and their impact on beneficiaries and political economy matters

Type	Country - Region	Programme name	Description	Law enacted?	Impact evaluation / replicated from	Political economy decision
Cash transfers						
	Brazil - LAC	<i>Bolsa Familia</i>	Pure CCT programme aimed at closing the poverty gap. Targeting is based on single mean testing.	Yes	Ex-ante simulation. Inspired by a federal intervention in the city of Campinas in 1995 (Bourguignon et al. 2003).	Scale-up the programme to 11 million beneficiaries.
	Colombia - LAC	<i>Familias en Accion</i>	CCT programme with complementary services for adults and children. Targeting based on proxy mean testing. The programme started in 2001.	Yes	Quasi-experiment based on Propensity Score Matching at municipality level. Improvements in child human capital and women empowerment (Attanasio et al. 2005). Inspired by Mexico's <i>Progreso/Oportunidades</i> .	Due to the positive impact originated by the CCT, the decision was to scale-up the programme to 3 million beneficiaries.
	Ghana - Africa	Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty - LEAP	Cash transfer programme with geographic selection designed as CCT but no monitoring has been implemented so far.	Yes	Replicated from the Latin American experience and technically assisted by the World Bank and UNICEF.	The Ghanaian government created the growth and poverty reduction strategy in 2005, where the LEAP was proposed. The initial plan was to reach 30,000 households. In 2012 the programme initiated a scaling-up process to enrol 200,000 households by 2015.
	Kenya - Africa	Cash Transfers for Orphan and Vulnerable Children	Cash transfer strategy that combines conditionalities in some pilot districts with pure income transfers. Entitled households must belong to the selected district with an individual proxy mean testing method, complemented with a community based validation.	No	Pilot phase of the programme started with an ex-ante evaluation in 2004. In 2008 the World Bank sponsored the exchange of the Latin American experience and the programme and included a quasi-experimental evaluation whose results were published by The Kenya CT-OVC Evaluation Team (2012).	The programme initiated a pilot with 7 districts and 17,500 households. A loan from the World Bank, a donation from UNICEF and the commitment from the Kenyan government started a scaling up plan to reach 74,000 households. Taking the reference from Latin America the intervention was required to include a conditionality component in some districts, where attendance in health and school services is mandatory.
	Lesotho - Africa	Child Grants Programme	Pure cash transfer aimed at supporting orphans and vulnerable children (OVC).	No	European Commission donated the funds to run the programme for 5 yrs through UNICEF in 2007. Programme included an evaluation component based on an experiment. The programme was inspired by the South Africa's Child Support Grant.	The evaluation report was issued in January 2012 (Pellerano et al. 2012). Due to the negative impact of the rain season, the World Food Programme and UNPD provided additional funding to extend the programme for one more year.

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Type	Country - Region	Programme name	Description	Law enacted?	Impact evaluation / replicated from	Political economy decision
Cash transfers						
	Mexico - LAC	<i>Progresa/Oportunidades</i>	CCT programme with complementary services for adults and children initiated in 1997.	Yes	Experimental method. Improvement of nutritional status in the early childhood and school attendance in rural areas (Skoufias 2005).	Scale-up the programme up to 5 million beneficiaries.
	Malawi - Africa	Social Cash Transfer	Unconditional cash transfers that aim to reduce poverty and guarantee food security. Due to the evaluation strategy the initial individual selection process included a random assignment.	No	The programme started in 2006 with an experimental evaluation method. A report highlighted that the SCT increases the investment in agricultural assets and inputs. However, low skilled adult workers reduced their labour supply, while children increased farm-related activities at home (Covarrubias, Davis and Winters 2012).	The programme was initially assisted by UNICEF in 2006. The programme's pilot initiated in one district and scaled-up into six. In 2012 Malawi received a contribution from the European Union for funding the programme.
	Nicaragua – LAC	<i>Red de Protección Social</i>	Pure CCT programme with proxy mean testing.	No	Experimental method. Improvements in school attendance, vaccination and health of participating children (Maluccio and Flores 2005).	The programme operated from 2000 until 2007. The Nicaraguan government replaced it by an in-kind transfer of livestock (chickens, hens, pigs, seeds and technical assistance).
	Nigeria - Africa	Kano State CCT for girls	CCT with verified conditionalities targeted to school-aged girls in the Kano State in northern Nigeria. The programme is in its pilot stage, funded by the federal MDG fund.	No	The programmes is replicated from the Latin American experience. The programme was randomly assigned with experimental evaluation.	The evaluation of the pilot phase (with 10,000 recipients) will provide essential information on the scope of the results as well as the operational requirements. The implementation entails the use of biometric identification and alternative payments, such as cell phones and SMS
	Philippines – Asia	<i>Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program</i>	Pure CCT programme with proxy mean testing. Benefits cover children between 0-14 yrs old and pregnant women.	Yes	Inspired by <i>Progresa/Oportunidades</i> , <i>Bolsa Familia</i> and <i>Familias en Acción</i> in 2008.	The programme was expected to reach 321,000 households in 2013. However, the pilot phase was speeded up and in 2012, it had 2.8 million beneficiaries.

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Appendix 1: Selected social transfer programmes and their impact on beneficiaries and political economy matters

Type	Country - Region	Programme name	Description	Law enacted?	Impact evaluation / replicated from	Political economy decision
Cash transfers						
19	South Africa - Africa	South African Grant System	Is a set of unconditioned cash transfers composed by the child support grant, old age pension, disability grant, care dependency grant and the foster care grant. The broad of the targeting criterion is based on the different categories in which the recipients are classified, while the assignment is mean tested. The first one to be introduced was the old age pension in 1928.	Yes	The system emulates some European welfare approaches and was not designed on an evaluation policy. However, the targeting criteria have allowed the impact assessment employing quasi-experimental methods, such as regression discontinuity and dose-response functions, especially for the old age pension and the child support grant. In both cases positive effects have been detected on nutrition, school attendance and child labour (Heinrich et al. 2012)	Given that the programmes obey to a rights-based assignment, the impact evaluations in the last decade have been informative but not decisive. Rather, they have been used as example for the implementation of similar interventions in other developing countries.
	Tanzania - Africa	Community-Based Conditional Cash Transfer Programme	Pilot CCT programme started in 2008. It is testing a novel approach of targeting and monitoring based on the community work instead of the institutional capacity. The targeting method is based on the community agreement and proxy mean test. It is part of the Tanzania Social Action Fund (TSAF) that had a first phase between 2000-05.	No	The programme replicates de Latin American experience with the support of the UNICEF and a loan from the World Bank. It has its own evaluation component based on a village-level random trial.	The impact evaluation results are expected to be released in 2013. Given the fact that this CCT is testing a community component, this assessment will bring the main decision-making element in order to scale it up upon a national level.
	Turkey - Asia	Social Risk Mitigation Project	Pure CCT Programme with proxy mean testing.	No	Inspired by <i>Progresar/Oportunidades</i> in 2001.	The World Bank provided a US\$500 million loan for the pilot and first phase. The target was 1.1 million recipients.
	Uruguay - LAC	<i>Ingreso Ciudadano</i>	CCT programme created, among others, as part of an emergency package between 2005-07.	Yes	The programme was replicated from the general design of CCT in Latin America. No impact evaluation was included as part of the implementation but household surveys allowed the assessment of the programme with quasi-experimental methods (Borraz and González 2009).	The programme was replaced by the 'Equity Plan' that was introduced in 2007.

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Appendix 1: Selected social transfer programmes and their impact on beneficiaries and political economy matters

Type	Country - Region	Programme name	Description	Law enacted?	Impact evaluation / replicated from	Political economy decision
Integrated poverty alleviation strategies						
	Chile - LAC	<i>Chile Solidario</i>	Cash transfer and integrated anti-poverty strategy. Based on proxy mean testing.	Yes	Independent quasi-experiments using secondary data have found no effects of this intervention on poverty reduction (Galasso 2011). However, Guardia et al. (2011) detected positive effects on number of workers in the family and some other labour indicators.	Initially, the Chilean government intended this intervention to reach 250,000 households. The current government created the Ministry of Social Development and <i>Chile Solidario</i> strategy is now known as <i>Ingreso Etico Familiar</i> (Ethical Family Income).
	Colombia - LAC	<i>Red Unidos</i>	Pure anti-poverty strategy. Extreme poor targeted by proxy mean testing.	No	Replicated from <i>Chile Solidario</i> in 2006. Ongoing quasi-experimental impact evaluation.	Programme, initiated in 2006, is currently at an expansion phase. The institutional instability of the executing agency has held back its implementation.
	Jamaica - LAC	Programme of Advancement Through Health and Education - PATH	Social transfer that selects poor households with an assignment score (a proxy mean test) with five different categories of focus: children, elderly, people with disabilities, pregnant and lactating women and poor adults between 18-59 yrs old.	No	The programme is based on previous CCT interventions like <i>Progres/Oportunidades</i> but extends its scope beyond human capital formation. It has a quasi-evaluation design that showed positive short-term effects on human capital an poverty reduction (Levy and Ohls 2010)	The programme had funding between 2001-05 from the Jamaican government and a loan from the World Bank. In the light of the positive effects of the pilot phase, the PATH was scaled-up to 180,000 beneficiaries.
	Paraguay - LAC	<i>Tekoporá</i>	Cash transfer and integrated anti-poverty strategy with proxy mean testing.	No	Inspired by <i>Chile Solidario</i> in 2005. A propensity score matching method showed that the programme caused a significant increase in school attendance (Teixeira et al., 2011). Soares et al. (2008) found positive effects of <i>Tekoporá</i> on consumption.	After a pilot with 3,453 households in 2005 the programme is intended to reach 200,000.
	El Salvador - LAC	<i>Red Solidaria</i>	Cash transfer and anti-poverty strategy. Targeting based on poverty mapping.	Yes	Inspired by <i>Progres/Oportunidades</i> in 2005.	In 2007 the programme was introduced in urban areas.

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Appendix 1: Selected social transfer programmes and their impact on beneficiaries and political economy matters

Type	Country - Region	Programme name	Description	Law enacted?	Impact evaluation / replicated from	Political economy decision
Active labour market programmes with transfers						
	Chile - LAC	<i>Chile Joven</i>	Job training programme for youths between 16-24 yrs old. The intervention operated from 1991 through 1999 in two phases. Was the first youth training programme Latin America that incorporated basic or life skills, technical training and cash stipend. Targeted by proxy mean testing.	Yes	External quasi-experimental evaluation with propensity score matching. The programme improved the labour market insertion of 50% of participating youths (Jacinto and Gallart 1998).	The programme was phased out in 1999 after enrolling 170 youngsters. The Chilean government decided to integrate all job training programmes into one intervention so-called <i>Programa Nacional de Becas</i> - national scholarships programme.
	Colombia - LAC	<i>Jovenes en Acción</i>	Job training programme aimed at improving the employability of youths between 18-25 yrs old by training and on-the-site practice. Targeted by a proxy mean test.	No	Quasi-experimental evaluation base on difference-in-differences. Intervention increased the probability of being employed. Most results were not significant for female participants (DNP-SINERGIA 2008). This programme was inspired by Chile Joven in 2000.	The programme was phased down in 2007 and its administration relies completely on the national training service.
	Dominican Republic - LAC	<i>Juventud y Empleo</i>	Job training programme with technical instruction and internships. The programme transfers cash to participating youths between 16-29 yrs old. Geographically targeted in poor areas with randomly individual assignment.	No	Experimental evaluation with several cohorts. Increases formal jobs for males and wages for females (Card et al, 2011). Replicated from <i>Chile Joven</i> in 2008.	The impact evaluation and monitoring data allowed the redesign of the programme and the expansion to most of large cities in the country with 40,000 beneficiaries.
	Ethiopia - Africa	Productive Safety Nets Programme	The programme was launched in 2005 as one of the largest public works intervention in Africa, reaching more than 7 million beneficiaries geographically selected.	No	It is based on the South Asian public work experience. The evaluation relies on a quasi-experiment performed by the IFPRI (Gilligan et al. 2008) who found positive effects on food security and livestock accumulation.	After an initial phase 2005-07 reaching 5 million workers, the programme evolved into a second one reaching 7/6 beneficiaries with a total investment of 1.040 million dollars (80% from donors) in which the government committed with in-kind contribution.
	Malawi - Africa	Public Works Programme	Workfare programme without training component that aims to create temporary employment by building infrastructure in rural areas. It was introduced in 1995.	No	It is based on the South Asia's workfare experience. The programme does not count on an exhaustive impact evaluation. Chirwa et al. (2002) performed a linear regression with selection bias correction; they found positive effects on employment levels.	The operation of the PWP has fluctuated since it was initiated in the mid-1990s depending on the flow of donors' resources.

