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Adapting *Fomento* to countries in Sub-Saharan Africa[1]

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Although one of the hallmarks of an effective development intervention is its successful implementation across a variety of contexts, programme replication is often overlooked. In a recent project, the International Food Policy Research Institute adapted a well-regarded Brazilian agricultural intervention, *Fomento*, for implementation and evaluation in two African countries, Senegal and Malawi. The rigorous impact evaluations accompanying the African *Fomento* interventions will allow for documentation of their impacts, demonstrating the effectiveness of similar programmes across different economic and social contexts.

Fomento is a rural productive inclusion component of the Brazil without Extreme Poverty strategy. It targets extremely poor farmers, providing time-limited resources intended to lift them to a sustainably higher level of agricultural production. Potential beneficiaries are identified in the *Cadastro Único*—a registry of poor households in Brazil, whose income information is used to identify the population eligible for *Bolsa Família* transfers and other targeted social benefits. Beneficiaries meet with an extensionist, who draws up a plan to increase the productivity of the household farm. The benefit amounts to a total of BRL2,400, paid within two years in two or three instalments. The goal is to link farmers to the public food distribution system (*Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos— PAA*).

In adapting *Fomento* to African countries, we sought to replicate the three most important components of the intervention. First, rather than simply providing technical advice, *Fomento* is more comprehensive, touching on both farming techniques and farm management. Second, the substantial one-season cash transfer is clearly important, as capital constraints may otherwise limit farmers' ability to execute their plans. Third, it is crucial to link farmers to markets, so they can sell their increased excess production at fair prices.

As part of the adaptation process, it was necessary to recognise differences between the Brazilian and African contexts. No single registry similar to the *Cadastro Único* exists, so an alternative targeting mechanism was necessary. Additionally, government extension and public distribution systems are relatively underdeveloped, requiring other means of linking farmers to markets. Finally, although electronic cash transfer systems exist in both countries, they were not developed enough to support a cash transfer programme at the time of implementation.

To overcome these differences, we teamed up with local farmer organisations in both countries: the *Fédération des Organisations Non Gouvernementales du Sénégal* (FONGS) and the National Smallholder Farmer Association of Malawi (NASFAM). They have provided access to farmers as an alternative targeting mechanism and were able to link farmers to markets. The decision to work with farmers' organisations rather than, for example, a fully personalised extension service, meant that extension was potentially limited to farmers in groups growing specific crops. Moreover, we had to select the appropriate transfer amount and design a mechanism to distribute the transfer. Because rain-fed agriculture is predominant in both countries, timing the intervention properly was extremely important; therefore, farmers received cash at critical times during the season for specific inputs. We determined transfer amounts that reflected the differences in the living standards of each country, as well as the cost of inputs required to grow target crops. In Malawi, we included a treatment arm in which inputs (rather than cash) were distributed directly, to test whether this transfer modality would lead to stronger impacts.

Pre-implementation discussions with partners necessarily led to some differences in the way the two pilot projects were implemented. In Senegal, FONGS typically provides some extension for its members while also facilitating linkages between farmers and traders. As an entry point to communities, FONGS uses *animateurs*, or villagers with some additional training, who although not as well trained as extensionists, can visit farmers each month. Because it was necessary to work within the pre-existing institutional structure, *animateurs* were trained to provide extension services. Several important elements of the project were a departure for FONGS and required extensive discussion—including the transfers and the value of the randomised component of the research—before implementation.

In Malawi, NASFAM provides extension through a lead farmer model, whereby one farmer in each group is trained by NASFAM and charged with assisting the other members. To maximise extension services, NASFAM hired additional extensionists to support the project, so that farmers in treatment villages could receive support directly from an extension worker. With NASFAM, we chose areas growing groundnuts and soy as cash crops, and each farmer group chose one crop on which to concentrate.

In both countries, discussions among the research team, FONGS and NASFAM did not end as the project was implemented, but rather led to an ongoing conversation on how to improve services to farmers within and outside the *Fomento* context. Treatments were successfully randomised by farmer group, with control groups receiving the standard services provided by the organisation. Consequently, impact estimates will consider the additional impact of management extension, cash or input transfers, or a combination thereof, contributing to the evidence base about the effectiveness of *Fomento*-style programmes on a global level.

Reference:

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