

Research Statement

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My field of research lies in the purview of Development Economics, with an interest in providing quantitative evidence aimed at improving welfare policies in the developing world (Sub-Saharan Africa). One aspect of my research is to understand why some cultural practices persist, despite their harmful effects. Another line of my research focuses on evaluating the impact of existing programs and policies in developing countries. My approach to these works combines the exploration of survey data, simple empirical techniques in applied economics, and a deep understanding of context. Below I describe my current and future research agenda.

Current Work

Early marriage has become a global development agenda because of its harmful effects on married girls, their children and the economy. In my job market paper, "**Early marriage and Conflict: Evidence from The Biafran War**", I provide evidence on one of the reasons why early marriage persists. Defining early marriage as marriage before age 16 years, I exploit variation across ethnicity and cohort provided by the Nigerian Civil War, known as the Biafran War, to study the effect of conflict on early marriage of exposed women. Using data from Nigeria Demographic Health Survey (NDHS), and performing a difference-in-difference analysis, I find that being exposed to the Biafran war at ages 10 to 15 years increases the probability of getting married before the age of 16 years by 7%. There are several plausible mechanisms through which the Biafran War may have influenced early marriage decisions. The severe starvation imposed by the war in the Biafra region could have motivated households to use early marriage as a survival strat-

egy. Another plausible explanation could be the use of early marriage as a protective mechanism against the sexual violence associated with the war. Regardless of the channel, my findings suggest that conflict could compel individuals to resort to traditions and practices that can have a long run impact on their welfare.

In "**Evaluation of Educational Policies on Enrollment Rates in Ghana**", I analyze the effects of Ghana's Educational Policies implemented in 2004 and 2005 (the Capitation Grants, School Feeding Program and Compulsory Kindergarten) on enrollment rates in Basic School over time. I look at the overall effects, as well as differential impacts on districts and individuals depending on their characteristics. Both district and individual level data reveal that the policies led to an increase in enrollments rates, with an overall increment in NER (GER) by 25% (10%) in 2006 and 11% (10%) in 2008 respectively at the basic level. While the district level data reveals that on average, increase in enrollment rates have since fluctuated around these figures, the individual data shows that these numbers have decreased over time. Both data also show that despite the increase in these indicators, disparities in enrollment rates by wealth and place of residence exist. However, there is no evidence of gender disparity. In addition, the gap that existed between the northern and the southern regions has reduced. These findings call for attention on the equity and sustained effects of these policies.

Future work

My research agenda for the future is to build on the findings in the job market paper and explore how early marriage has affected the welfare of these women. My impression is that, the magnitude of the effect of conflict on early marriage can be translated into welfare loss for these women. I plan to use detailed information on health, education and various measures of domestic violence provided by the NDHS to examine the effect of early marriage on these women and their children.

In view of the aforementioned papers as work in progress, I intend to complete and submit for publication soon, possibly leading to further related projects. I also intend to harness my familiarity with the African environment, as well as seeking funding from institutions such as the World Bank, African Development Bank, that have peculiar interests in works such as these, to conduct lab-in-field experiments in these countries to test some of the underlying mechanisms behind the findings in the course of my research career.