



INTERNATIONAL FOOD
POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE
sustainable solutions for ending hunger and poverty

Supported by the CGIAR

The Future in Mind: Long-run Impact of an Aspirations Intervention in Rural Ethiopia

Tanguy Bernard (Bordeaux/IFPRI) Stefan Dercon (Oxford)
Kate Orkin (Oxford) Alemayehu Seyoum Taffesse (IFPRI)

RESILIENCE EVIDENCE FORUM

October 2-3, 2017

Washington D.C. Plaza Hotel



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

CENTER FOR
RESILIENCE

Outline

- ❑ Motivation
- ❑ Summary – questions, approach, findings, contributions a five-year field experiment;



Motivation

- ❑ Poor people in developing countries often *do not invest, even when returns are high*:

Examples: Duflo et al., 2008; Bryan et al., 2012; Miguel and Kremer, 2004; Munshi and Rosenzweig, 2006;

- ❑ People may form beliefs that they are *unable to improve* their economic position:

- *Example 1:* Rahmato and Kidanu, 1999
“It is a life of no thought for tomorrow”, “We have neither a dream nor an imagination”
- *Example 2:* Taffesse and Tadesse (2017) – LoC and propensity to adopt modern farm inputs;

- ❑ Limit effort, investment, uptake of new technologies;

Summary: Questions and Definition

□ Questions:

- *Are low aspirations a possible explanation?*
- *Can we change aspirations persistently?*

□ Aspirations

- *forward-looking goals* or targets (Locke and Latham, 2002).
- *bounds among individuals' preferences*, the elements of the choice sets which they consider as relevant for them and motivate their actions.



Summary: Approach

- ❑ **Measurement** – develop a dedicated instrument to measure individual aspirations through surveys – *four domains*;
- ❑ **Identification** – aspirations and choice/behavior are interlinked;
 - **Field experiment** – *exogeneous/external shock to aspirations* in a remote rural district of Ethiopia using ‘role model’ documentaries;
 - **Treatment** – randomly invite farmers to watch documentaries about ‘role models’;
 - **Placebo** – randomly invite another group of farmers from the same villages to watch an Ethiopian TV entertainment programme;
 - **Control I** (within-treatment-village controls) – randomly select and survey framers from the same villages;
 - **Control II** (pure controls) – randomly select and survey framers from pure control villages, where no treatment took place, after five years.

Summary: Findings

- ❑ Find small changes
 - **Aspirations and expectations**, especially for children's education – *higher after 6 months (persists over 5 years)*
 - **Internal locus of control** – *increases after 6 months (does not persist over 5 years)*
- ❑ Small but significant changes in **future-oriented behaviour**
 - Savings, credit *increase after six months (do not persist)*;
 - Child school enrolment and spending on schooling *increase after six months (persist after 5 years)*
 - Small increases in spending on agricultural inputs (seeds and fertilizer and land rented) (*tested only after 5 years*)
- ❑ Small changes in **welfare**: stock of assets; durables consumption (*tested only after 5 years*)
- ❑ **Spill-over effects** on variables - children's school enrolment, investment in crops and livestock, and consumption (*after 5 years*)

Summary: Contributions/caveats

- ❑ **Clear link** from exposure to potential role models to changes in **aspirations/beliefs** and **outcomes**.
 - Build on work on exposure to female role models (Beaman et al., 2012; and others).
 - **No other intervention; experimental design.**
 - **Placebo:** control for effects of exposure to media, gathering.
 - **Provide little to no concrete new information** (unlike Jensen, 2010, 2012).
- ❑ Long run follow up;
- ❑ Examine **spillovers** - within-village controls pure control villages;

Caveat

- ❑ *How aspirations are formed or why they are lower among the poor* (Dalton et al. 2016 vs Genicot and Ray 2017));
- ❑ *External validity* of point estimates of effects in a less remote contexts;

Summary: Relevance to resilience

❑ Resilience

- Multiple characterizations – range from speed of recovery after a shock through to transformation;
- A commonality – refer to the capacity/capability of individual, households, communities, region, etc.

❑ Beliefs and preferences, including aspirations, are key elements/determinants individual capabilities;

❑ Aspirations can thus provide a pathway to promote resilience (subjective resilience) and development;



Thank You