

# Brazil–Africa knowledge-sharing: What do African policymakers say?<sup>1</sup>

by Cristina Cirillo, Livia Maria da Costa Nogueira and Fábio Veras Soares<sup>2</sup>

**Within the framework of the project 'Brazil & Africa: Fighting Poverty and Empowering Women via South–South Cooperation',** the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG) promoted an exchange of experiences of cooperation between Brazil and African countries on social protection and food and nutrition security. From June to August 2015, the IPC-IG invited African policymakers working in the area of social protection and food and nutrition security to participate in an online discussion and a survey about the cooperation between their countries and Brazil. The main objective was to assess the achievements of knowledge-sharing and learning exchange activities in the areas of social protection and food and nutrition security. The information gathered in these discussions was contextualised in Cirillo et al. (2016). In this One Pager, we present a summary of the major achievements and challenges of this process, as well as some suggestions from the participants on how to make this learning exchange more effective in the future.

In total, 48 African representatives of ministries in charge of social protection and food and nutrition security programmes in 24 different countries participated in the survey and/or in the online discussion.

They mentioned that Brazilian representatives contributed to the events at which African countries started to define social protection as a human right, and to raising awareness towards conceiving South–South cooperation as a way to achieve common goals. According to several participants, the knowledge exchange with Brazil is considered “crucial for the evolution of social protection” in their countries, by reaffirming confidence in the role of cash transfers in reducing poverty. Moreover, the engagement of the Brazilian government promoted the commitment of senior African leaders to strengthen social protection systems.

According to the African representatives, the main lessons learned from the exchange with Brazil concern: the fundamental role of social protection policies and programmes in eradicating poverty and food and nutrition insecurity; the importance of coordinating interventions through a centralised registry; the need to regulate and recognise social protection programmes through legislation; and the need to have high-level governmental institutions committed to ensuring strong and resilient social protection systems.

The results of the survey and of the online discussion confirm that knowledge-sharing between Brazil and Africa comprises a set of different learning initiatives and exchanges, rather than a long-term, structured plan of action. Every representative reported having been involved in knowledge-sharing activities (e.g. study visits, webinars or international seminars) with the participation of Brazilian officials and/or experts. They recognised the importance of these learning initiatives and look forward to their continuation. It was clear that countries were encouraged by the positive results achieved in Brazil through social protection and food and nutrition security policies and programmes. This exchange with Brazil has inspired the design and implementation of similar instruments in African countries.

We found that several African cash transfer programmes were inspired by the Brazilian experience. In particular, the Livelihood Empowerment Against

Poverty (LEAP) programme in Ghana, the National Social Protection Policy in Kenya and the Cash Transfer programme in Cape Verde received support from Brazilian institutions during their design phase. The Brazilian experience with school feeding programmes has inspired similar initiatives in Niger, Zambia, Lesotho, Ghana and others, largely supported by the World Food Programme (WFP) Centre of Excellence against Hunger and the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (Agência Brasileira de Cooperação—ABC). In addition, Purchase from Africans for Africa pilots were implemented in Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Niger and Senegal) by the Brazilian General Coordination of Humanitarian Cooperation and Fight Against Hunger (CGFome) with support from the WFP, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and bilateral organisations such as the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

According to the participants, many instruments used in their countries' social protection and food and nutrition security programmes were also inspired by the Brazilian experience, due to study visits and international seminars (several having been supported by the IPC-IG, the World Bank, UNICEF and the WFP) but outside a formal bilateral cooperation programme framework. Examples include the conditional cash transfer programme in Madagascar, the Social Transfer Programme in Mauritania and the Single Registry in Lesotho.

It is worth noting that African countries also reported having been inspired and influenced by other specific features of the Brazilian social protection system, such as the Social Assistance Unified System (Sistema Único de Assistência Social—SUAS); the Reference Centres for Social Assistance (Centros de Referência de Assistência Social—CRAS); the way the Bolsa Família programme implements its conditionalities; the fact that women are the main recipients of the programme's benefit payments; and its payment structure, whereby benefits vary according to the demographic composition of the family.

The representatives also reported that cooperation with Brazil faces several challenges, such as: language barriers; the lack of a legal and formal framework for the implementation of the technical cooperation; resource constraints; and difficulties in adapting Brazilian tools to different social and economic contexts and institutional arrangements. Thus, they look forward to having more structured formal bilateral agreements in the future—as South–South cooperation projects—to receive formal technical support from the Brazilian ministries and further promote existing knowledge-sharing initiatives. However, they strongly acknowledged the fundamental advocacy role of the Brazilian government in promoting social protection and food and nutrition security programmes and policies as a way to eradicate poverty and hunger in African countries.

#### Reference:

Cirillo, C., L. Da Costa Nogueira, and F. Veras Soares. 2016. “The Brazil–Africa Knowledge-Sharing on Social Protection and Food and Nutrition Security.” Working Paper 143. Brasília: International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth.

#### Notes:

1. This publication is part of the UK Department for International Development (DFID) supported project: 'Brazil & Africa: Fighting Poverty and Empowering Women via South–South Cooperation'
2. International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG).