



Health risks and migration in Sub-Saharan countries

SHORT TITLE (ACRONYM OR OTHER):

Health Risks and Migration.

PROJECT DURATION:

3 years.

COUNTRIES WHERE THE RESEARCH WILL BE CARRIED OUT:

Nigeria. Tanzania. England. France. Netherlands.

COORDINATING INSTITUTION:

Institute for Fiscal Studies, London.

RESEARCH LEADER:

Alice Mesnard.

COLLABORATING INSTITUTIONS AND BENEFICIARIES:

The beneficiaries of the Health Insurance Fund (HIF) in Kwara state (Nigeria).

The Hygiea , the health maintenance organisation in Nigeria.

Pharm Access, Nigeria, NGO , field implementer for the HIF.

Amsterdam Institute for International Development (AIID).

The Health Insurance Fund (HIF) in Netherlands.

The Economic Development Initiatives (EDI), Tanzania and survey teams and analysts.

University of Ilorin, Taching Hospital, in Kwara state, Nigeria. (senior researcher, student)

Oxford University (senior researcher, student).

Toulouse University (senior researcher, student).

Summary

Health risks are among the most severe risks confronting poor households in Sub-Saharan Africa, especially in areas where affordable and good quality health care is scarce and access to health insurance is limited. Individuals may travel far distances or even move to other places in order to seek treatment, to escape from infectious diseases or to help their families overcome financial hardship resulting from high medical expenditures and loss of income due to illness. Such relationships between health risks and migration are rarely explicitly studied despite their important consequences for the planning, targeting and effectiveness of health policies. Our research will investigate the role of migration in dealing with the risks of chronic and acute illnesses, injuries, hospitalizations and communicable diseases that may not only affect the health of people but also their economic situation.

We will focus on two countries, Nigeria and Tanzania, where these issues are highly relevant. These countries are strongly affected by infectious diseases such as malaria and HIV/AIDS and by other, non-communicable diseases. Health care facilities that provide good quality care are often unavailable for poor households, especially in rural areas. Nor do poor households have access to well-functioning insurance and credit markets to cope with the financial consequences of health problems. Migration may offer at least three channels to ease such problems, which we investigate in our project by addressing the following questions:

1. How important is temporary migration as a health-seeking strategy for individuals who experience health problems and seek affordable and good quality care?
2. What is the role of migration as a risk-coping strategy to mitigate the impacts of health shocks on poverty?
3. What are the relationships between migration, infectious diseases and development?

To answer these questions, we will build behavioural economic models of migration, remittances, demand for health care and prevention against infectious diseases. This involves modeling a number of important factors such as imperfect information and liquidity constraints that the households in our sample are likely to face.

We will test for the relevancy and predictions of our models using two main sources of data from longitudinal household surveys in Nigeria and Tanzania. We are actively contributing to the data collections in collaboration with large interdisciplinary teams of local and international scientists and practitioners. For the specific purpose of our research, we will design additional survey instruments in cooperation with the local researchers and partners. The collected data on migration, health, transfers and epidemiology will first be used in a descriptive way to document the relative importance of the three channels that link health and migration.

Our methods and results will be disseminated constantly during the three years of the research through our fieldwork with the teams in Nigeria and Tanzania, a workshop with health practitioners as well as through scientific conferences, academic publications and press releases for policy makers and the general public. To further enhance local research capacity within the study countries, we will actively involve local junior researchers in the analyses and we will provide training on the impact evaluation of health interventions in Nigeria.