

Explaining Public Support for Social Protection: Empirical Evidence from Ghana

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In recent decades, social protection has increasingly gained global credence and acceptance as a key tool for reducing poverty, enhancing social cohesion and promoting economic growth. As such, many low and middle income countries especially in Africa, Asia and Latin America are currently expanding their public social protection systems by implementing either social assistance schemes (eg. cash transfers, food vouchers, & in-kind transfers) or social health protection programmes (eg. national/community health insurance schemes) and even in some cases both.

However, despite the recent prevalence of social protection initiatives in the developing world, not much has yet been done to explain factors that affect the sustainability of social protection, for instance that of public support. A majority of the studies available predominantly center on evaluating the impact of social protection on various dimensions of poverty and human capital development. The existing evidence on public support largely stems from studies on attitudes towards redistribution or support for the welfare state in highly developed countries. Therefore, using data from an attitudinal survey conducted in Ghana between January to March 2017, this paper analyses public support for social protection in a development context. The paper explores the role of factors such as self-interest and attitudes towards the poor in explaining support for social protection. Furthermore, the paper analyzes how and in what ways these factors hinder or facilitate reform processes across the different policy areas of social protection. Lastly, the paper also explains how public support could contribute to the political sustainability of social protection reforms in developing countries.

This study contributes to expanding the literature on demand for social protection by highlighting factors specific to a developing country context. In addition, the paper is of high policy relevance for national governments, policy makers and international donor agencies since its findings has direct policy implications for the design and implementation of both new and existing social protection instruments in various developing countries across the globe.