

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED SINCE 2000
AND WHAT WE SHOULD DO 2010-2020?

Manchester
8th -10th Sept 2010



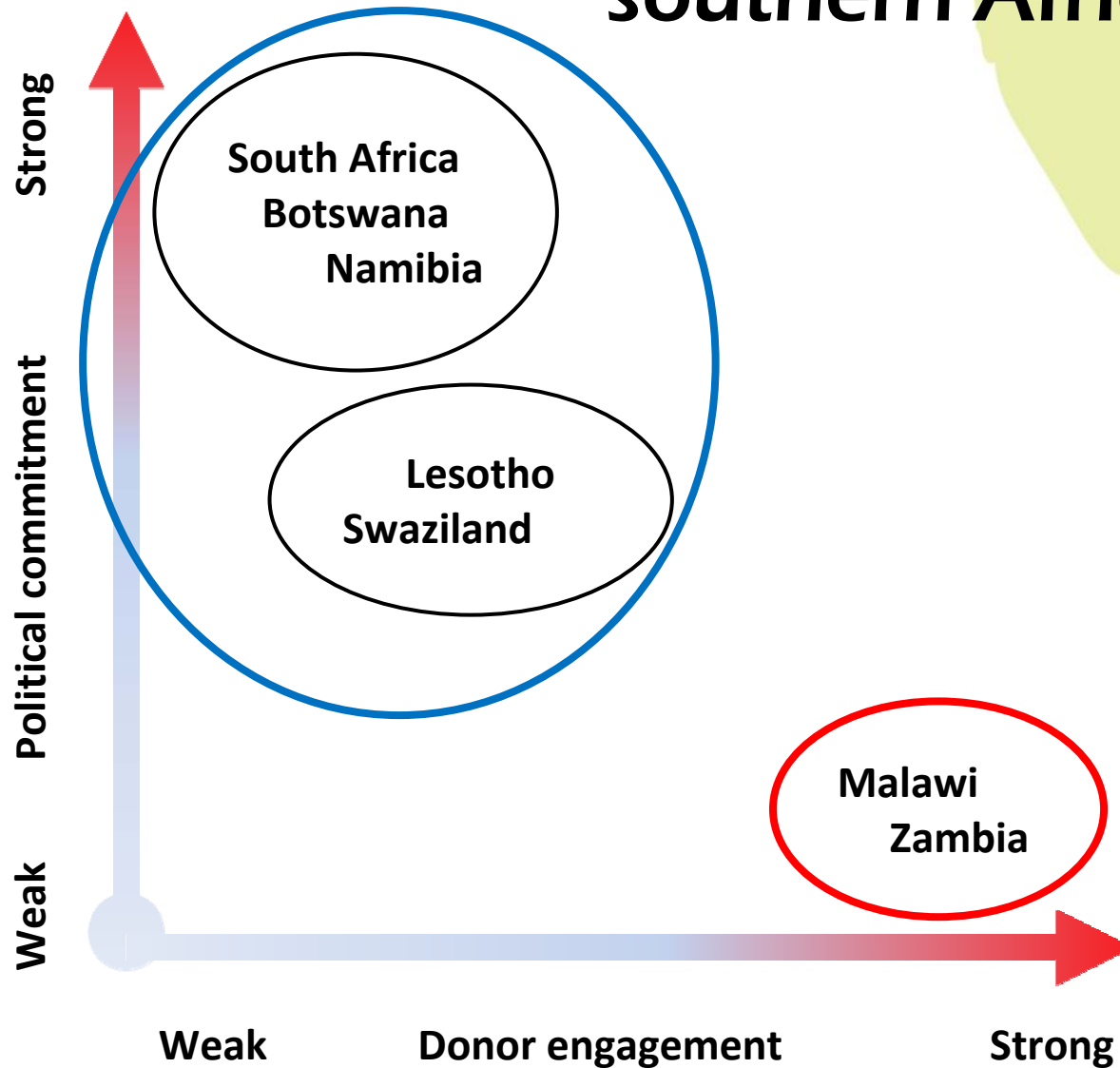
From research findings to policy change: the role of parliamentarians in the promotion of social transfers in southern Africa

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Context - poverty & social transfers in southern Africa

- **Poverty is chronic, pervasive & resistant**
 - only 2 countries on track to meet MDG1
- **Economic growth hasn't reduced poverty**
 - high levels of income inequality
- **Humanitarian assistance only alleviates and may even exacerbate poverty**
 - a buffer against difficult policy reforms?
- **Social protection, particularly social cash transfers, seen as a more effective means of protecting the poor, promoting livelihoods and fostering wider pro-poor economic growth**

Adoption of social transfers in southern Africa



- Sorry, but neither donor engagement nor evidence based research are pre-requirements for the effective adoption of social transfers

- Learning from “peers”/neighbours is an important factor – not simply explained by affordability

Social transfers research: a western obsession?

- **Profusion of pilots, evidence, lessons and best practices**
 - Not convinced? Just look at IDS, ODI and wahenga websites!
 - Malawi – 24 pilots in just 1 district (ODI 2006)
 - A donor pre-occupation
- **Yet lessons and best practices often not followed up . . . even by donors who fund the research**
 - Food aid in Lesotho and Swaziland (see <http://www.wahenga.net/node/1025>)
- **Research can be divisive & obstruct progress**
 - The targeting debate in Malawi and Zambia
- **Fear of commitment?**
 - Investing in research offers a means of staying engaged without committing to funding scaled-up social transfer systems
 - The funding cycle excuse

Some messages for donors

- **How much added value from more research ?**
 - At very least a more critical evaluation of research priorities and proposals - **especially piloting!** (see <http://www.wahenga.net/node/1012> & <http://www.wahenga.net/node/1047>)
- **Time to get off the fence**
 - Narrow in (from social protection to cash transfers)
 - Invest in advocacy , dialogue and awareness building
- **Learning through implementation, not experimentation**
 - Research is a continuous process; there is no nirvana
 - You can't improve what you don't implement
- **Recognising when to step back – from driver to facilitator**
 - National ownership and drive are paramount
 - Nurture drivers of change
 - Long term engagement
 - Foster national debate and engagement

RHVP: from social transfers research to advocacy & ownership

- Consolidating research (<http://www.wahenga.net/resources>)
 - REBA - 20 case studies + 6 thematic & policy context briefs
 - FoSP – 9 policy & programme design oriented briefs
- Advocacy & ownership
 - Distilled Policy Briefs (see <http://www.wahenga.net/briefs/policy>)
 - “A transfer out of poverty” – YouTube
 - **wahenga** - web portal stimulating engagement & translating research into advocacy (www.wahenga.net)
 - Utilising national radio & newspapers to gain a wider audience and getting voices heard
 - **Parliamentarian Policy Dialogue on Poverty & Social Transfers**

SADC-PF/RHVP policy dialogue initiative on poverty & social transfers

- **Objectives**
 - Build awareness & understanding
 - Foster national debate & dialogue
 - Nurture drivers of change
- **Activities**
 - Awareness building workshops for new parliaments
 - Budgetary process / Gender / HIV-AIDS / **Social transfers**
 - Botswana / DRC / Lesotho / Swaziland
 - In-depth national/regional policy dialogues on social transfers
 - Angola / Botswana / Lesotho / Malawi / Mozambique / Namibia / Swaziland / Tanzania / Zambia / Zimbabwe
 - Parliamentary handbook

Why parliamentarians?

- **Potential**
 - **Growing democratisation** – increasing importance
 - **Roles** – representation, legislation & oversight
 - **Getting social transfers on to the political agenda** - Lesotho 2006 general election
 - **Vested interest** – re-election
- **Challenges**
 - **Still immature democracies**
 - Vote buying v election pledging
 - Often more concerned about thwarting the opposition than taking the initiative
 - **Varied educational attainment of parliamentarians** - 15% to tertiary level
 - **Sidelined/undermined by executive** – engagement in budget process
 - **Limited understanding of wide range of policy issues**
 - **Limited awareness of what's going on**
 - **Donor reticence to engage with parliaments , let alone political parties!**

Impact

- **In summary**
 - Limited but needs to be put into perspective in terms of resources and duration
- **Increased awareness**
 - Over 550 parliamentarians and parliamentary staff exposed to the social transfers debate, of which over 200 engaged in more detailed policy dialogue
 - Pre /post workshop perceptions exercises indicate significant positive swing in opinions regarding social transfers
- **Individual initiatives**
 - Private Members Bills in support of scaled up social transfers in Malawi & Zambia
 - Direct intervention of MPs in social transfers delivery system impasse in Swaziland

Lessons

- **Legislatures generally under-valued, under-equipped & under-utilised**
- **Significant unmet demand for knowledge & skill development – not just social transfers**
- **Driver of change often not “ready made” but need to be nurtured.**
- **Support needs to be both more intensive & more sustained**
- **From parliamentarians to political parties; the real prize!**

Where next?

- **SADC-PF proposal to continue and expand policy dialogue work . . . but no donor interest**

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