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SOUTENANCE DE THÈSE DE THI HOAI AN NGUYEN (ANTENNE NORD UMI SOURCE)

Le 28 mars 2023, Thi Hoai An NGUYEN (Doctorante UMI SOURCE antenne Nord) a soutenu sa thèse sous la direction du PR Stéphane Goutte (UMI SOURCE) intitulée " Education, family, inequality and child outcomes: Empirical Evidence from Vietnam".

Composition du jury

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Keywords: Child Development, Inequality, Environments

Summary:

This Ph.D. dissertation explores different aspects of the environment and development of Vietnamese children. Chapter 1 is joint work with Stéphane Goutte, looking at the effect of early preschool education on the skills, educational attainment, and health of poor children. It is acknowledged that better quality early childhood environment benefits child development. In this respect, early preschool attendance could be an essential policy to boost human capital accumulation. In this chapter, we estimate the impact of preschool starting age on the skills, educational attainment, and health of poor children in Vietnam.

Exploiting the longitudinal Young Lives survey and applying the double machine learning estimator to produce the estimates of average treatment effects, we found that starting preschool younger significantly increases the highest grade achieved and creates a behavioral response of increasing subsequent parental investment in education. We find short and medium-term positive effects of starting preschool younger on child cognitive skills but little evidence on child non-cognitive skills. We also uncover the short-term negative impact of starting preschool younger with measures of child health. This chapter thus provides the implication that expanding access to preschool needs to improve the quality of preschool education to achieve comprehensive child development. Chapter 2 studies the impact of drought on the education, labor, and healthcare utilization of Vietnamese children. Understanding the heterogeneous impact of drought on children and the household characteristics associated with resilience to drought can provide valuable inputs for policies to strengthen the resilience and reduce the negative impact on poverty and inequality in the long run.

Exploiting the exogenous rainfall deviation from the long-run average within local areas, I find that drought severity is significantly associated with being more likely to work for economic activities and using fewer outpatient services. The results show more potent effects for the younger cohort, suggesting that families are more likely to use young child labor to cope with income loss due to severe droughts. The heterogeneity analysis shows that boys and children from disadvantaged backgrounds are particularly vulnerable to severe drought. They are more likely to drop out and work for economic activities when experiencing severe drought.

The empirical evidence strongly supports the income effect as the channel through which drought affects child outcomes. The findings support the importance of education and social allowance, which can buffer the detrimental impacts of drought and strengthen the resilience of children to drought. In Vietnam, land has conversed massively from rural to urban purposes. Rural-to-urban land conversion changes the livelihood of rural and agricultural households and leads to a rapid transformation of land cover. Chapter 3 aims to determine the impact of this transformation on the education and labor outcomes of children from agricultural and rural households. Exploiting the variation in the cropland and urban land cover within local communes, I found that urban land and cropland cover affect child labor in the same direction. While expansion in urban land cover is significantly associated with a decrease in agricultural labor in household agricultural activities, a fall in cropland in the neighborhood leads to higher participation of children in these activities. I also show that land cover change from rural to urban can have disproportionate impacts on rural children depending on their economic background. Children from agricultural households are more likely to work for wages outside the household. Thus, they can be more vulnerable due to the urbanization process in rural areas compared to those from business households. These different effects can worsen inequality among rural children.