

Overview of Ongoing Research Projects

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I am an applied economist employing experimental methods to address policy-relevant questions in development, education, labor, and gender economics. I am a [J-PAL](#) Faculty Affiliate, an [IZA](#) Research fellow and an [EGAP](#) member (since 2010). My work has been funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, the Russell Sage Foundation, the Spencer Foundation, the World Bank, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the IZA G²LM|LIC program, the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), JPAL and the US State Department. I currently have three primary lines of research, within the broad fields of: 1) political economy; 2) economics of education; 3) development economics.

My early work focused primarily on the first line of research, and employed laboratory experiments to investigate individuals' decision to engage in corruption. In the field, much of my past work focused on subpar behavior of health and education service providers in low-income countries, and on service recipients' willingness and ability to hold them accountable. I currently have three completed papers and one ongoing project within this line of research. One paper ("[Activating Change: The Role of Information and Beliefs in Social Activism](#)" with F. Afridi, A. Basistha and A. Dhillon) employs an online survey experiment in India to examine the drivers of *remote* social activism, i.e., activism that does not require in-person engagement, such as petition signing, donations to NGOs and engagement with video campaigns. A second related paper ("[Can Crises Affect Citizen Activism? Evidence from a Pandemic](#)" with the same coauthors) uses quasi-experimental methods to test the impact of the (largely unexpected) second wave of the pandemic in India on social activism aimed at reducing fraud and corruption in the health sector. A third paper ("[Proud to belong: The impact of ethics training on police officers in Ghana](#)" with Donna Harris, Oana Borcan, Harry Telli, Bruno Schettini and Stefan Dercon) employs an RCT in Ghana to test the impact of an ethics training program for traffic police officers on unethical behavior. Another ongoing project within this line of research ("[Who self-select into committees: The pro-social or the corrupt?](#)" with former student Andy Cao and Dmitry Ryvkin), employs a laboratory experiment to investigate self-selection into committees managing public funds.

My second line of research focuses on the **economics of education**, asking primarily what interventions could succeed in diversifying male- and white-dominated fields of study. In my previous work ("[Gender differences in the choice of major: The importance of female role models](#)"), Catherine Porter (Lancaster University) and I found that in-person exposure to female role models could attract more women into economics. In ongoing follow-up work, Catherine and I assess the impact of the role model intervention on labor market outcomes. Another ongoing [project](#), joint with Jonathan Meer (Texas A&M University) employs an RCT targeting high school counselors in Texas with the aim of increasing awareness about the economics major. We have received funding from the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) and CSWEP to evaluate our intervention using the Texas Education Research Center data. In another [project](#), joint with Daniel Gomez-Vasquez (PhD candidate, Texas A&M University), we employ an RCT aimed at increasing retention among under-represented economics majors at TAMU through encouragement emails sent on behalf of the economics department. I am also working on a [project](#)

[in Peru](#) (joint with Marcos Agurto (Universidad de Piura) and Sudipta Sarangi (Virginia Tech University) aimed at increasing interest in the engineering major among female high school students. We recently piloted a novel RCT consisting in Instagram reels targeting female students, and information videos targeting teachers and shared through WhatsApp. [New work](#) with Celeste Carruthers (University of Tennessee), Kalena Cortes (Texas A&M) and Ishara Casellas Connors (Texas A&M), funded by JPAL, will examine the impact of targeted coaching programs on student transfers from community colleges to 4-year colleges.

My third line of research focuses primarily on **gender disparities in low-income countries**. A [project in Somalia](#) (joint with Elijah Kipchumba, Catherine Porter and Munshi Sulaiman) employs an RCT to examine whether exposure to male or female role models (college students) affects gender attitudes, educational aspirations and education outcomes of primary school students. An [ongoing project in Uganda](#) (joint with Kjetil Bjorvatn, Shymal Chowdhury, Catalina Franco and Munshi Sulaiman) evaluates the impact of female leadership in Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs). In collaboration with BRAC Uganda, we implemented a field experiment consisting in nudging VSLAs to appoint a new Chairperson. In randomly selected VSLAs, the nudge was to appoint a woman; in other randomly selected VSLAs the nudge was to appoint a new male chairperson. We examine the treatments' impacts on female leadership and VSLA performance, as well as chairperson's and members' well-being and attitudes. Another [current project in Northern Uganda](#) (joint with Alessandra Cassar, Eeshani Kandpal, Miranda Lambert and Christine Mbabazi) employs lab-in-the-field experiments and surveys to examine the long-term impact of extreme war victimization (i.e., *childhood abduction*) on women's mental health, preferences, and socio-economic outcomes. A follow-up study (*currently in the field*) assesses through an RCT the effects of unconditional cash transfers, group-based coaching and group-based mental health counseling on the well-being of a larger sample of women who were victimized as children.

In the past year, I have expanded my work in development economics (which so far has focused primarily on countries in Sub-Saharan Africa) to South Asia. Together with Raymond Robertson (Bush School, TAMU), Farzana Afridi (Indian Statistical Institute) and Hamna Ahmed (Lahore School of Economics), I was awarded an [IZA|G2LM large grant](#) to investigate (through surveys and RCTs) barriers to women's career advancement in the apparel industry in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. This work will take place in collaboration with the H&M Group. Also with Raymond Robertson and Hamna Ahmed, I received funding from the US State Department – through a collaborative agreement – to design and implement research aimed at facilitating women's active participation in the Green Transition in Pakistan's apparel industry.

Finally, I have ongoing experimental/behavioral projects aimed at identifying or correcting biases in hiring or career advancement. [One project](#), joint with Elira Kuka (George Washington University) uses an RCT to evaluate the impact of a streamlined mentoring program (the [Adopt a Paper](#) program) on the academic success of junior faculty in economics. Another [project](#), joint with Daniel Gomez-Vasquez and Tim Salmon, extends Daniel's dissertation work on the drivers of hiring biases against Black and Hispanic workers.