

Hongdi Zhao

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EDUCATION

Cornell University, Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management

Ph.D., Major: Applied Economics and Management; Minor: Data Science

Ithaca, NY

Expected May 2026

Master of Science in Applied Economics and Management

Jan 2025

Research Interests: International and Development Economics, Machine Learning, Econometrics

Cornell University, Cornell Brooks School of Public Policy

Master of Public Administration, Concentration: International Development

Ithaca, NY

May 2018

Master Thesis: Study of Village Savings and Loans Associations and Their Ability to Address the Credit Needs of Smallholder Farmers in Southern Tanzania

East China Normal University (ECNU), School of Finance and Statistics

Bachelor of Science in Statistics

Shanghai, China

June 2016

Bachelor Thesis: Economic and Environmental Spatial Regression Analysis

JOURNAL PUBLICATIONS

1. Kosec, Katrina, Jie Song, [Hongdi Zhao](#), and Brian Holtemeyer. "The gendered impacts of income fluctuations on household departure, labor supply, and human capital decisions: evidence from Kyrgyzstan." *Feminist Economics* 29, no. 1 (2023): 205-235.
2. Kosec, Katrina, Kamiljon Akramov, Bakhrom Mirkasimov, Jie Song, and [Hongdi Zhao](#). "Aspirations and women's empowerment: Evidence from Kyrgyzstan." *Economics of Transition and Institutional Change* 30, no. 1 (2022): 101-134.
3. Ragasa, Catherine, Isabel Lambrecht, Kristi Mahrt, [Hongdi Zhao](#), Zin Wai Aung, and Jessica Scott. "Can nutrition education mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on dietary quality? Cluster-randomised controlled trial evidence in Myanmar's Central Dry Zone." *Maternal & Child Nutrition* 17, no. 4 (2021): e13259.

REPORT & POLICY PUBLICATION

Christopher B. Barrett, Shamaila Ashraf, Jessica Fanzo, Mario Herrero, Daniel Mason-D'Croz, Sudha Narayanan, Jaron Porciello, Medha Bulumulla, Jackson Hart, Jasmin Higo, Cody Kugler, Jialu Li, Claire Lynch, Shivanshu Sharma, Juan Vergara, and [Hongdi Zhao](#) on behalf of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). 2022.

Introducing the Agrifood Systems Technologies and Innovations Outlook (ATIO). Rome FAO.

<https://doi.org/10.4060/cc2506en>

WORKING PAPERS

- "Impact of Minimum Marriage Age Law on Child Marriage: Evidence from Nigeria's Child Rights Act". [Hongdi Zhao](#), Ene Ikpebe, Nneka Esther Osadolor, and Joseph Ajefu
- "Who Gains from Bringing Government Closer? Evidence from Ethiopia on the Gendered Effects of Decentralizing" Katrina Kosec, Jie Song, [Hongdi Zhao](#), and Lucia Carrillo

WORK IN PROGRESS

- "Adaptive Mechanism Design: Optimal Incentives for a Sustainable Drought Insurance Program". [Hongdi Zhao](#), Karlijn Morsink, Anouk van Veldhoven
- "Optimal Dynamic Adaptive Sampling to Minimize Child Malnutrition in Kenya". [Hongdi Zhao](#), Chris Barrett, Sumanta Basu, Minjie Jia, Susana Constenla-Villoslada
- "Poverty Dynamics in Peru: A Grouped Fixed Effects Approach with Rotating Panels". [Hongdi Zhao](#), Seungmin Lee

WORKING EXPERIENCE

Analysis Group, Denver, CO June – Aug 2025
Summer PhD Associate

Amazon, Seattle, WA May - Aug 2024
Economist Intern, People eXperience & Technology Central Science (PXTCS)

International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington, DC Sep 2020 – Jul 2021
Research Analyst, Development Strategy and Governance Division
PIs: Katrina Kosec, Catherine Ragasa

- Co-author on paper to study government decentralization and its impact on gender equality in Ethiopia.
- Analyzed Kyrgyzstan panel dataset from 2004-2016 to study the effects of income shocks on rural health and nutrition. Constructed instrumental income variables and computed Rotemberg weights.

Yale University, Department of Economics, New Haven, CT Aug 2019 – Aug 2020
Pre-doctoral Research Fellow, Yale Economic Growth Center

PIs: Rohini Pande (Yale University), Erica Field (Duke University), Giorgia Barboni (University of Warwick)

- Designed survey questionnaires to collect social protection, particularly on food security information related to Public Distribution System (PDS) shops in Chhattisgarh in collaboration with the Department of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection. Built Tableau dashboard to present district food distribution status and wrote a report to the government with findings and suggestions.
- In charge of 80,000 migrant database, designed and conducted migrant surveys to understand their skills and needs in order to build programs to support migrants during the COVID lockdown in India.
- Used Google Maps Platform to access location APIs and wrote Python script to request geocode information that was used for study randomization. Randomized study villages and programmed survey questionnaires to SurveyCTO.
- In charge of the power calculation and randomization for the “Money (Not) to Burn: Payments for Ecosystem Service to Reduce Crop Residue Burning” paper.

Harvard Kennedy School of Government, Cambridge, MA Jul 2018 – Jul 2019
Research Fellow, Evidence for Policy Design

PIs: Rohini Pande (Yale University), Erica Field (Duke University), Giorgia Barboni (University of Warwick)

- In charge of NIH data archiving: cleaning, harmonizing, and archiving survey data containing 8000+ households’ information to Harvard and Yale data repositories.
- Conducted data analysis on household, health, and social network data on over 50,000 respondents for the paper “Rural Banks Can Reduce Poverty: Experimental Evidence from 870 Indian Villages.”

CARE—Cornell Collaboration Research, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania Jun – Dec 2017
Research Fellow, Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future

PIs: Arnab Basu (Cornell University)

- Led an independent study about financial inclusion in Southern Tanzania to evaluate the project's ability to address the credit needs of Tanzanian smallholder farmers; designed the study survey.
- Conducted 240 individual interviews and facilitated 8 focus group discussions.
- Paper: Villages Savings and Loan Associations and their Ability to Address the Credit Needs of Smallholder Farmers.

Cornell Student Multidisciplinary Applied Research Teams (SMART) Project, New Orleans, LA Jan – May 2017
Research Team Member, Foundation for the Mid-South

PI: Ralph Christy (Cornell University)

- Analyzed data from the U.S Census Survey of Business Owners; conducted field research, and benchmark analysis of universities, communities, and federal organizations; developed a regional enterprise strategy for Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi.
- Paper: A Regional Enterprise Development Strategy for The Foundation for The Mid-South.

United Nations Environment Programme, Nairobi, Kenya

May – Jul 2015

Project Intern, Division of Policy Implementation

- Demonstrated great communication and project management skills through organizing the UNEP Regional Conference in Malaysia. Lead a section related to advanced technologies used to protect wildlife during the conference.
- Conducted literature reviews for wildlife conservation policies and wrote policy briefs.
- Oversaw editing, layout, and production of the Chinese-language version of the *Stolen Apes* report.

Ecobank Group, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Aug 2014 – Feb 2015

Client Management Consultant, Corporate Banking Department

- The only Chinese employee working in the bank to be in charge of 27 Chinese corporate clients.
- Maintained the existing clients and expanded the bank business with 7 new corporate clients.
- Reviewed and evaluated corporate business loan applicants.

Women Empowerment, Manipal, India

Jan – Feb 2013

Project Intern, Manipal University

- Conducted field research on projects for women empowerment in 20 small villages in the Kaikamba countryside.
- Organized projects to teach women skills to become self-supporting in tobacco production and farming.
- Helped six self-help groups with more than 120 women in total to take loans from banks and start their tobacco and dairy product businesses.

HONORS AND AWARDS

- Dyson Graduate Teaching Assistant – Outstanding Service Award 2025
- Graduate Research Grant, Cornell Atkinson Center for Sustainability (\$7,020) 2025
- Pi Alpha Alpha Honor Society Member 2018
- Teaching Assistantship, Cornell Policy Analysis Department (\$34,000) 2018
- Cornell Institute for Public Policy Fellowship Award, Cornell University (\$7,500) 2016–2018
- Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future Research Fellowship, Cornell University (\$7,000) 2017
- Merit-based Scholarship for Statistics Student, East China Normal University 2014

SERVICES AND LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

- Peer Mentor, [STARS program](#), Cornell University 2024-current
- [Economics That Really Matters \(ETRM\)](#)
 - Editor-in-Chief 2024-2025
 - Assistant Editor 2023-2024
- Project Lead, The Student Multidisciplinary Applied Research Teams (SMART) Program, Cornell University
 - [E&E Green Farms in Rwanda](#) 2023-2024
 - [Child Marriage in Nigeria](#) 2023-2024
 - [Developing a U.S. Sustainable Tourism Index](#) 2022-2023
- [Graduate Resident Fellow](#), Flora Rose House, Cornell University 2022-2025
- Vice President, Cornell Women in Public Policy, Cornell University 2017-2018
- Vice President, International Association of Students in Economics and Commerce, China 2013-2014

TEACHING ASSISTANT EXPERIENCE

- AEM 3275/5275, Introduction to Machine Learning in Business Spring 2025
- AEM 6120, Applied Econometrics Fall 2024
- AEM 6940/4940, Introduction to Machine Learning Spring 2024
- AEM 4415/5415, Field Research and Pre-Engagement with Social Enterprises in Emerging Markets Fall 2023
- AEM 4421/5421, Research and Strategy in Emerging Markets Spring 2023
- ECON 1120, Introductory Macroeconomics Summer/Winter 2023, Winter 2022
- AEM 4420/5420, Emerging Markets Fall 2022
- PAM 2100, Introduction to Statistics Spring 2018

REFEREE SERVICE

Journal of African Economics, Emerging Markets Finance and Trade

SKILLS

- **Software & Programming:** Stata (Advanced), Python (Advanced), LaTeX (Advanced), Excel (Advanced), R (Intermediate), SQL (Intermediate)
- **Languages:** Mandarin (Native Speaker), English (TOEFL: 103, IELTS: 7.5)