

Hongdi Zhao

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EDUCATION

Cornell University, Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management August 2021 - Current

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

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

Cornell University, Cornell Brooks School of Public Policy, Ithaca, NY May 2018

Master of Public Administration, Concentration: International Development

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, Shanghai, China June 2016

Bachelor of Science in Statistics

Bachelor Thesis: Economic and Environmental Spatial Regression Analysis

PUBLICATIONS

1. “[The Gendered Impacts of Income Fluctuations on Household Departure, Labor Supply, and Human Capital Decisions: Evidence from Kyrgyzstan](#)” with Katrina Kosec, Jie Song, and Brian Holtemeyer. 2023. *Feminist Economics* 29(1), 205-235
2. “[Aspirations and women’s empowerment: Evidence from Kyrgyzstan](#)” with Katrina Kosec, Kamiljon Akramov, Bakhrom Mirkasimov, and Jie Song. 2022. *Economics of Transition and Institutional Change*, 30(1), 101–134.
3. “[Introducing the Agrifood Systems Technologies and Innovations Outlook \(ATIO\)](#)”. 2022. *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*.
4. “[Can nutrition education mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on dietary quality? Cluster-randomised controlled trial evidence in Myanmar’s Central Dry Zone](#)” with Catherine Ragasa, Isabel Lambrecht, Kristi Mahrt, Zin Wai Aung, and Jessica Scott. 2021. *Maternal & Child Nutrition*, 17(4), e13259.

WORKING PAPERS

- “Optimal Dynamic Adaptive Sampling to Minimize Child Malnutrition in Kenya” with Chris Barrett, Sumanta Basu
- “Poverty Dynamics in Peru, a Data-Driven Approach Using Synthetic Panel” with Seungmin Lee
- “Bring Power to the People or the Well-Connected? Evidence from Ethiopia on the Gendered Effects of Decentralizing Service Delivery” with Katrina Kosec, Jie Song
- “The Effects of Child Marriage on Women’s Labor Market Participation in Nigeria”, with Nneka Okoh

MAJOR RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

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.”

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.

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.

HONORS AND AWARDS

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| • Data Science Fellow, The Data Incubator | 2020 |
| • 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 |

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

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| AEM 6120, Applied Econometrics | Fall 2024 |
| • Teaching Assistant for Professor Brian Dillion | |
| AEM 6940/AEM 4940, Introduction to Machine Learning | Spring 2024 |
| • Teaching Assistant for Professor Jingwei Zhang | |
| AEM 4415/5415, Field Research and Pre-Engagement with Social Enterprises in Emerging Markets | Fall 2023 |
| • Teaching Assistant for Professor Fridah Mubichi-Kut | |
| AEM 4421/5421, Research and Strategy in Emerging Markets | Spring 2023 |
| • Teaching Assistant for Professor Ralph Christy and Professor Fridah Mubichi-Kut | |
| ECON 1120, Introductory Macroeconomics | Summer/Winter 2023, Winter 2022 |

- Teaching Assistant for Professor Thomas Evans
AEM 4420/5420, Emerging Markets Fall 2022
- Teaching Assistant for Professor Ralph Christy
PAM 2100, Introduction to Statistics Spring 2018
- Teaching Assistant for Professor Thomas Evans
NCCT 5020, Intermediate Microeconomics (Tsinghua & Cornell Joint MBA) Spring & Fall 2023
- Course Assistant for Professor Michael Waldman

SERVICES AND LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

- Peer Mentor, [STARS program](#), Cornell University 2024-current
- Assistant Editor, [Economics That Really Matters \(ETRM\)](#) 2023-current
- 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-current
- Vice President, Cornell Women in Public Policy, Cornell University 2017-2018
- Vice President, International Association of Students in Economics and Commerce, China 2013-2014

PROFESSIONAL WORKING EXPERIENCE

Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies, Ithaca, NY Oct 2016 – Dec 2017
Graduate Student Assistant, Cornell University

- Managed website, weekly e-newsletter, Facebook, and Cornell Event Calendar of the Institute for African Development and the Latin American Studies Program.
- Assisted with set-up and break-down of lecture series and conferences, and communication with speakers.
- Designed and created posters for center events and conferences using InDesign.

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.
- Lead the organization of several activities on behalf of Ecobank Tanzania:
 - "Chinese Night": the first activity for Chinese in Tanzania gathering together with more than 600 Chinese participants. This event is co-organized with the Chinese Business Council and Group Six Construction Company Limited, and the event received very good feedback from Chinese companies in Tanzania.
 - The main host of the 3rd Tanzania Law Training Seminar to facilitate business legally and provide corresponding financial services.

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.

SKILLS

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