

# Rocco Zizzamia

Centre for the Study of African Economies · Manor Rd · Oxford OX1 3UQ, UK

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Development economist with 10 years of experience in applied research in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Motivated to produce evidence that has a tangible impact on human welfare. Working with policymakers and NGOs and using experimental methods to evaluate the effects of social policies on climate adaptation and households' resilience to shocks.

## Current Appointments

Lecturer in Quantitative Methods (Dept. of Int. Development, University of Oxford) 11/09/2025-present  
Fulford Junior Research Fellow (Somerville College, Oxford University) 01/10/2023-present  
Post-doctoral Research Fellow (Dept. of Economics, University of Oxford) 15/11/2022-present

## Education

*University of Oxford*, DPhil, International Development Viva: 20/07/2023  
*University of Oxford*, MPhil, Development Studies (Distinction) 07/08/2018  
with concentration in Development Economics  
*University of Cape Town*, Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Economic History (Distinction) 20/12/2015  
*University of Cape Town*, Bachelor of Social Science in Philosophy (Distinction) 19/12/2014  
Visiting student, University of California, Berkeley

## Research

### SELECT PUBLICATIONS

Jain, R., Budlender, J., Zizzamia, R., & Bassier, I. (2023). [The labor market and poverty impacts of COVID-19 in South Africa](#). *South African Journal of Economics*. 91(4), 419-445.

Schotte, S., & Zizzamia, R. (2022). [The livelihood impacts of COVID-19 in urban South Africa: A view from below](#). *Social Indicators Research*. 1-30.

Zizzamia, R., Schotte, S., & Leibbrandt, M. (2022). [Snakes and Ladders and Loaded Dice: Poverty Dynamics and Inequality in South Africa, 2008 to 2017](#). *South African Journal of Economics*. 214-242.

Zizzamia, R., Bassier, I., Budlender, J., Leibbrandt, M., & Ranchhod, V. (2021). [Locked down and locked out: Repurposing social assistance as emergency relief to informal workers](#). *World Development*, 139, 105271.

Clementi, F., Fabiani, M., Molini, V., & Zizzamia, R. (2021). [Are We Really Painting the Devil on the Walls? Polarization and its Drivers in Sub-Saharan Africa in the Past Two Decades](#). *Journal of African Economies*.

Zizzamia, R. (2020). [Is employment a panacea for poverty: A mixed-methods investigation into employment decisions in South Africa](#). *World Development*. 130. 104938.

Schotte, S., Zizzamia, R., & Leibbrandt, M. (2018). [A poverty dynamics approach to social stratification: The South African case](#). *World Development*, 110, 88-103.

#### WORK IN PROGRESS

[Acting early under uncertainty: Anticipatory cash transfers in the context of flood disasters](#) (with Stefan Dercon, Ashley Pople, Hannah Timmis, Prabhmeet Matta)

[Rejection sensitivity and on-the-job search: A lab-in-the-field experiment in South Africa](#), **Revise and Resubmit**, *Journal of Behavioural and Experimental Economics*

[Group Coaching and the Scalability of Ultra-Poor Graduation Programs: Evidence from Three Field Experiments](#) (with Stefan Dercon, Emily Beam, Dean Karlan, and others). **Submitted**

Anticipatory Education Support During Climate Crises: An evaluation of Cash Transfers and Remote Education in Kenya (with Noam Angrist and Stefan Dercon)

Optimal household targeting of cash transfers in a disaster setting (with Hannah Timmis, Stefan Dercon, Ashley Pople, Prabhmeet Matta)

Welfare-Risk Trade-offs in Anticipatory Aid: A Portfolio Theory Approach (with Prabhmeet Matta)

[Fostering Adaptation to Climate Change: The Role of Multifaceted Social Protection Programmes and Microcredit](#) (with Prabhmeet Matta and Anindita Bhattacharjee)

[Ultra-poor graduation programmes and resilience to climate shocks: A mixed-methods investigation in flood-prone Pakistan](#) (with Nasir Iqbal and Saima Nawaz)

#### Research and Teaching Experience

##### RESEARCH

Consultant (International Labour Organization) 05/02/2022 - 07/08/2022

Research Assistant (Oxford Department of Social Policy and Intervention) 08/07/2022 - 07/12/2022

Research Officer (Southern African Labour and Development Research Unit) 22/01/2016 - 05/07/2021

Consultant (National Income Dynamics Study-Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey) 05/04/2020 - 07/10/2020

Visiting Fellow (GIGA German Institute for Global and Area Studies) 04/09/2022 - 20/12/2022

Short-Term Consultant (World Bank Group, Poverty Global Practice Unit) 17/06/2017 - 13/01/2018

##### TEACHING

Lecturer, Quantitative Methods (Oxford Dept. of International Development) 10/10/2024-21/07/2025

TA, Quantitative Methods (Oxford Dept. of International Development) 14/10/2020-18/07/2022

TA, Various (Philosophy Dept., University of Cape Town) 05/01/2013 - 11/11/2014

TA, Religion, Conflict and Violence (Religious Studies Dept, University of Cape Town) 08/09/2014 - 11/11/2014

## Grants (PI or co-PI)

<i>Anticipatory action for climate disaster response</i> , Weiss Asset Management Foundation <b>\$1,000,000</b>	2024 - 2025
<i>The impacts of an ultra-poor graduation program in building resilience: An investigation in flood-prone Pakistan</i> , International Growth Centre <b>\$25,000</b>	2025
<i>Anticipatory action for climate disaster response</i> , J-Pal King Climate Action Initiative <b>\$250,000</b>	2023 - 2025
<i>Boosting decent employment for Africa's youth</i> , International Development Research Centre <b>CAD\$500,000</b>	2019 - 2022
<i>Working to learn: an evaluation of an on-the-job training program</i> , J-Pal Post-Primary Education Initiative <b>\$25,000</b>	2019 - 2022

## Awards

Oxford Dept. International Development Scholarship	2022 - 2023
Clarendon Scholarship	2019 - 2022
Papiya Ghosh Thesis Prize (best MPhil thesis)	2018
Skye Foundation Scholarship	2016 - 2018
Michael Wills Scholarship	2016 - 2018
UCT Council Scholarship	2014, 2015
UCT Humanities Scholarship	2012, 2013, 2014
Twamley Scholarship	2012, 2013
Hyman Liberman Prize	2012

## Presentations

**2025** — ISDC, Berlin; AFD Conference, Paris (scheduled); IDOS Workshop, Bonn (scheduled); ISDC Fragile Lives, Berlin (scheduled); WFP Workshop, Rome (scheduled)

**2024** — a2i x GiveDirectly Conference, Dhaka (online); NOVAFRICA Conference on Economic Development, Lisbon; Oxford Economics Department Jamboree, Oxford; SALDRU Conference, Cape Town

**2023** — Department of Social Policy and Intervention workshop, Oxford; CREB Applied Development Economics, Lahore; ESA Africa Regional Conference, Cape Town; Path2Dev Conference, LUMS, Lahore

**2022** — WB/IZA/UNU-WIDER Conference, Cape Town; CSAE Workshop, Oxford

**2021** — UNU-WIDER Seminar, Helsinki (online); RESEP Seminar, Stellenbosch; CSAE Workshop, Oxford

**2020** — Agence Française de Développement; SALDRU; African Centre for Excellence in Inequality Research; IUSSP Population, Poverty and Inequality Research Conference (all online)

**2019** — IDRC/ILO/INCLUDE Workshop, Nairobi; WB/IZA/UNU-WIDER Conference, Bangkok; IUSSP Conference, University of Michigan

**2018** — CSAE Conference, Oxford; SALDRU Seminar, Cape Town; RESEP Seminar, Stellenbosch; African Studies Centre, Oxford; INET-YSI Africa, Harare; HDCA Conference, Buenos Aires; AFD Conference, Paris; GIGA Seminar, Hamburg

**2017** — Fifth Congress of African Economists, Malabo; HDCA Conference, Cape Town; CSAE Conference, Oxford; African Studies Centre, Oxford

**2016** — DSA Conference, Oxford; SALDRU Seminar, Cape Town; International Workshop on the Middle Class in Africa, Cape Town

## Public engagement

My research has been featured in the [Financial Times](#), [The Economist](#) ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#)), [The Mail and Guardian](#), among others. My own public-facing writing can be found [here](#).

## Service

**Policy engagement:** Policy modeling for the [Special Covid Grant Working group](#) – proposal to introduce a [Social Relief of Distress Grant](#) adopted by the South African government.

**Mentoring:** Co-founder of the [Oxford Africa Society Mentorship Scheme](#); Mentor for Lumiere Education

**Refereeing:** [Journal of Economic Inequality](#); [Economic Modelling](#); [World Development](#); [Review of Development Economics](#); [Applied Economics Letters](#); [South African Journal of Economics](#).

**Editor:** [CSAE Working Paper Series](#)

**Organiser:** CSAE Workshop on Social Protection and Climate Adaptation (2024); CSAE Research Seminar (2024-2025); Anticipatory Action panel at Fragile Lives (2025)

## Other information

**Programming/Software** - Stata, R, Python

**Languages** - English (native), Italian (native), German (actively learning), Afrikaans (basic)

**Sport** - Oxford University First Marathon Team and half-Blue colours. Marathon PB: 2h28

## References

Stefan Dercon ([stefan.dercon@economics.ox.ac.uk](mailto:stefan.dercon@economics.ox.ac.uk)); Pramila Krishnan ([pramila.krishnan@qeh.ox.ac.uk](mailto:pramila.krishnan@qeh.ox.ac.uk)); Christopher Woodruff ([christopher.woodruff@qeh.ox.ac.uk](mailto:christopher.woodruff@qeh.ox.ac.uk))