

# Rocco Zizzamia

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

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Quantitative social scientist with 10 years of experience in applied research in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Motivated to produce evidence that promotes climate change adaptation. Working with policymakers and NGOs and using experimental methods to evaluate the effects of cash transfers and social protection on poverty and household's resilience to climate shocks.

## Appointments

Fulford Junior Research Fellow (Somerville College, Oxford University) Oct. 2023-present  
Post-doctoral researcher in Economics (University of Oxford) Nov. 2022-present

## Education

University of Oxford, DPhil, International Development 2023  
University of Oxford, MPhil, Development Studies (Distinction) 2018  
with concentration in Development Economics  
University of Cape Town, Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Economic History (First Class) 2015  
University of Cape Town, Bachelor of Social Science in Philosophy (First Class) 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.

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, BIGD Dhaka)

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**

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

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

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

Timely cash transfers during floods: Evidence from the 2022 Pakistan Floods (with Muhammad Bin Khalid, Martin Mattsson, Prabhmeet Matta, and Ashley Pople)

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

Ultra-poor graduation programmes and climate adaptation in Bangladesh (with Munshi Sulaiman)

The effect of anticipatory action in the context of flood shocks in Somalia (with Michael Green and Prabhmeet Matta)

## Research and Teaching Experience

### RESEARCH

Consultant (International Labour Organization)	2022
Research Assistant (Oxford Department of Social Policy and Intervention)	2022
Research Officer (Southern African Labour and Development Research Unit)	2016 - 2021
Visiting Fellow (GIGA German Institute for Global and Area Studies)	2018
Short-Term Consultant (World Bank Group, Poverty Global Practice Unit)	2017 - 2018

### TEACHING

Lecturer, Quantitative Methods (Oxford Dept. of International Development)	2024-2025
TA, Quantitative Methods (Oxford Dept. of International Development)	2020-2022
TA, Various (Philosophy Dept., University of Cape Town)	2013 - 2014

## Grants (PI or co-PI)

*Anticipatory action for climate disaster response*, Weiss Asset Management Foundation  
**\$1,000,000** 2024 - 2025

*Anticipatory action for climate disaster response*, J-Pal King Climate Action Initiative  
**\$250,000** 2023 - 2025

*Boosting decent employment for Africa's youth*, International Development Research Centre  
CAD\$500,000 2019 - 2022

*Working to learn: an evaluation of an on-the-job training program*, J-Pal Post-Primary Education Initiative  
\$25,000 2019 - 2022

## Awards

Clarendon Scholarship 2019 - 2022

Oxford Dept. International Development Scholarship 2022 - 2023

Papiya Ghosh Thesis Prize (best MPhil thesis) 2018

Skye Foundation Scholarship 2016 - 2018

Michael Wills Scholarship 2016 - 2018

## Presentations

Since 2016 I have presented original research at over 40 international conferences and seminars.

## 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](#)

**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 \(2024-2025\)](#)

## Other information

**Software** - Python, Stata, R

**Languages** - English, Italian

Signed: Rocco Zizzamia 31/03/2025



## 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))