

Ayah Bohsali

PhD Economist specializing in Development and Urban and Spatial economics.
Date of Birth: 17/04/1998 — Nationality: Lebanese American
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<https://ayahbohsali.github.io/>

Education

- **Universitat Pompeu Fabra**, Barcelona, Spain — 09/2020 – 06/2026
PhD Candidate in Economics
PhD Thesis: *Conflict, Forced Displacement, and Growth: Evidence from Uganda*
 - Combined fieldwork, spatial data analysis, and machine learning to quantify how civil conflict and displacement reshaped labor markets and regional development.
 - Work based on original datasets built from census, geospatial, and conflict records.
 - Developed a quantitative spatial model to simulate policy-relevant counterfactuals.
- **Barcelona Graduate School of Economics**, Barcelona, Spain — 09/2019 – 07/2020
Master Program in Economics, Degree awarded by Universitat Pompeu Fabra and Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
- **American University of Beirut (AUB)**, Beirut, Lebanon — 09/2016 – 06/2019
B.A in Economics, GPA: 4.0/4.0, Graduated with High Distinction

Professional Experience

- **Centre de Recerca en Economía Internacional (CREI)**, Barcelona, Spain
Research Assistant — 07/2022 – 12/2024
Co-authored the working paper *Team Size and Performance: Experimental Evidence from India* (joint with G. Barboni and E. Giannone), contributed to empirical design, data analysis and writing.
- **Universitat Pompeu Fabra**, Barcelona, Spain
Research Assistant — 07/2021 – 09/2021
 - Co-authored the working paper *Short-term Effects of Air Pollution on Adolescents' Economic and Social Preferences* (joint with J. Apesteguia, X. Basagaña, D. Puig, and H. Llavador)
- **Instructor and Teaching Assistant (TA) Experience**
 - TA for undergraduate Microeconomics, Macroeconomics, Labor Economics and Data Analysis — 10/2021 - 04/2025
 - Master Project Advisory TA (Barcelona School of Economics) — 03/2023 - 07/2024
Managed 5 groups of 5 people (2023) and 8 groups of 5 people (2024) in developing research ideas and writing their Master's Thesis.
 - Instructor: co-developed and taught Introduction to Programming in R for Master's students — 09/2023 - 10/2023
- **UNDP**, Beirut, Lebanon
Economic Development Intern — 05/2019 – 07/2019
 - Drafted economic reports and briefs on the Lebanese economy.
 - Supported negotiations on equitable tax policy reform.
 - Conducted research on social and economic affairs, leading to key policy recommendations.
- **Amel Association**, Beirut, Lebanon
Research Intern — 01/2018 – 04/2018
Researched market assessment and entry strategies for the Soap Cooperative project, interviewed key stakeholders.

Conferences and Workshops

Presented own research externally at
Upcoming: Cities & Development Workshop (Harvard); World Bank-KDI School 6th Development Impact Conference; CEMIR Junior Economist Workshop on Migration Research (ifo Institute)
2025- Oxford Development Economics Workshop, European Economic Association Congress; 1st Workshop of Early Career Women in Economic Geography and Spatial Economics (LSE); CSAE Conference: Economic Development in Africa; Urban Economics Association meeting Berlin
2024- 49th Simposio de la Asociación Española de Economía; Urban Economics Association meeting Copenhagen, BSE Ph.D. Jamboree
Co-organized:
2023 - 2024 — CREi International Lunch Seminar
2022 - 2023 — UPF Applied Economics Student Workshop

Working Papers

Conflict, Forced Displacement and Growth: Evidence from Uganda

Abstract: I study the long run economic impact of a large-scale forced displacement policy in Uganda during the civil war. This policy forcibly relocated approximately 90% of the affected districts' population into Internal Displacement Camps for up to ten years. The mass displacement led to a lasting increase in population density in the localities hosting camps, which persisted for nearly a decade after people were free to return to their villages of origin. Consequently, the spatial distribution of the population in Northern Uganda was shifted, altering the economic geography and growth in the region. Combining and harmonizing satellite data with novel administrative data, I document that the forced displacement episode led to an occupational shift towards services and an increase in overall education levels. Yet the effects were not distributed equally: while camps experienced population growth, it is the neighboring now-emptier localities experiencing higher increases in services employment. When delving into mechanisms, I find that increased market access due to infrastructure reconstruction played an important role. I show that the long-term effects of forced displacement are stronger in places where camps lasted longer, and had higher population size. I develop a general equilibrium model that rationalizes these results.

Team Size and Performance: Experimental Evidence from India

Abstract: What are the gains of team size for performance? Does new technology diffuse faster in larger groups? To answer these questions and solve the endogenous sorting bias, we run the first randomized controlled trial where 1,582 Indian women were randomly assigned to 206 groups of different size and encouraged to engage in a production process. We find smaller teams to perform better than larger teams and that technology diffuses non-linearly with team size. By measuring bilateral communication within teams and conducting network analysis across team members, we find that smaller teams are more centralized than medium and larger. Our findings can be explained by smaller teams organizing the production process more efficiently, for example, by assigning tasks to group members and being more likely to reach a consensus on production decisions. To estimate the welfare effects of the intervention, we propose to build a network model with a heterogeneous group size. Size affects coordination costs as well as the impact of new technologies.

Gender and Consumption Inequality

Abstract: In this paper I conduct an in-depth analysis of consumption differences across single men and women. Using the Consumer Expenditure Survey, I establish a new set of facts regarding the consumption levels of single men and women: first, that overall consumption expenditures are lower for women than for men. Second, that the gender consumption gap behaves similarly to the gender wage gap. Third, that the gender consumption gap is decreasing with income. Fourth, I show that consumption heterogeneity by goods type is also decreasing with income, and lastly, I show that whereas poorer women hold less liquid assets than poorer men, this is not the case for women with income above the 40th percentile. I show that two channels are important for explaining the gender consumption gap: the gender income gap, and parenthood. Then, using a partial equilibrium two period model I aim to replicate the behavior seen in the data to understand the implications of having such a consumption gap.

Languages & IT Skills

- Languages: English (Native), Arabic (Native), Spanish (Advanced), French (Intermediate), Italian (Beginner)
- IT Skills: Python, R, STATA, Julia, MATLAB, Microsoft Office, QGIS, ARCGIS

Achievements

- Winner of Suad Sabbagh Sanioura Memorial Prize — 05/2019
- IMF Fund Challenge Winner — 04/2019

Interests

Theater (acting and directing experience), team sports, playing the guitar and piano, reading fiction. Community engagement, having volunteered as an English tutor for adult Syrian refugees with Jusoor NGO in Beirut.

References

Professor **Elisa Giannone** (advisor)
CREi, BSE & UPF
Email: egiannone@crei.cat

Professor **Jaume Ventura** (advisor)
CREi, BSE & UPF
Email: jventura@crei.cat

Professor **Gianmarco León-Ciliotta**
UPF, BSE & IPEG
Email: gianmarco.leon@upf.edu