

# Rocco Zizzamia

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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) Sept. 2025-present  
Fulford Junior Research Fellow (Somerville College, Oxford University) Oct. 2023-present  
Post-doctoral Research Fellow (Dept. of 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)

[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 Anindita Bhattacharjee and Prabhmeet Matta)

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)	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)

<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 in flood-prone Pakistan</i> , IGC <b>\$25,000</b>	2025
<i>Research on climate change adaptation practices using micro-narratives</i> , Gates Foundation <b>\$85,000</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 CAD\$500,000	2019 - 2022
<i>Working to learn: an evaluation of an on-the-job training program</i> , 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 in Development Studies)	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

**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))