Vishali Sairam

+91 - 9566159828 · vishalisairam@gmail.com · vishalisairam.github.io

Researcher and Data Scientist with academic background in Economics and Policy. Experienced in leveraging statistical tools and workflows to support evidence-based decision-making and in managing projects and collaborating effectively across diverse, multidisciplinary teams.

Education

Master of Public Policy (MPP), **Hertie School**, Berlin, Germany (2019 - 2021)
Concentration: Policy Analysis and Quantitative Methods
Fully funded through the Helmut Schmidt Scholarship (**DAAD**)

Integrated Master's (MA) in Development Studies, **Indian Institute of Technology, Madras**, India (2012 - 2017)
Minor: Economics

Professional Experience

World Bank   *Mar 23 - Present*

Economist Consultant, Poverty and Equity Team (India and MENA)

- **Designed and managed data pipelines** to scrape and harmonize administrative data from multiple sources; streamlined data collection workflows and built PowerBI dashboards to track welfare in India. Performed validation checks and developed metadata repositories to strengthen data governance and usability.
- **Developed spatial and statistical models** by integrating GIS datasets, satellite imagery, economic surveys, road networks, and administrative data to analyze economic growth and spatial disparities.
- Conducted **GIS-based** labor market analysis, mapping economic clusters and connectivity to hinterlands using nightlight data, road density, land use patterns, and OSM/Google Earth data; implemented workflows in QGIS and R.
- **Led analysis and visualization** of MGNREGA and PDS benefit distribution for ministerial briefs; contributed to CEQ studies, vulnerability indices, and welfare evaluations integrating survey and fiscal datasets.
- Created and managed **India Poverty & Equity SharePoint platform**, structuring knowledge repositories with metadata and differentiated access permissions to improve knowledge management and platform governance.
- **Leading the India State Profiles initiative,** developing interactive Power BI and R Shiny dashboards that integrate large-scale survey and administrative datasets (PLFS, NFHS, HCES, MPI) to support evidence-based decision-making at state and district levels.

Sakshm AI (earlier BlendNet AI)   *Apr 23 - July 23*

User Experience Researcher

BlendNet AI is a startup under Microsoft Research looking to integrate an AI powered Teaching Assistant into the existing cloud edge-satellite platform (Link)
- **Led the UX strategy** for VEDA, a LLM powered personalized teaching assistant by identifying user personas, crafting user journeys
- **Identified, streamlined and integrated relevant content** from across Government and Private data sources into the model

Microsoft Research India   *Aug 22 - Mar 23*

Research Intern

Worked on the pilot deployment of the BlendNet project - a cloud edge- satellite platform to deliver content to areas with intermittent internet. I collaborated with software engineers, UI/UX Designers, Product Managers and Analytics team at Microsoft India implement digital distribution solutions, aligning with policy goals for underserved populations.
- Managed the pilot deployment of BlendNet for **~68K users and 250 retailers** with external partners, field staff and Microsoft
- **Developed and maintained ETL CI/CD pipelines** in **Azure to collect, transform and load different types of data (user, telemetry** and orders) from users and retailer applications into SQL databases ensuring data interoperability
- **Developed and maintained dashboards** on PowerBI using collected data to support real-time decision-making and monitoring
- Collaborated on **design of survey instrument** for obtaining retailer and user feedback during and post deployment
- **Co-authored paper** on BlendNet deployment (published in **ACM COMPASS 2024**)

Centre for Digital Governance, Hertie School Berlin   *Aug 21 - Apr 22*
Research Project Manager

Worked with Joanna Bryson (Professor of Ethics and Technology, Hertie School) and researchers across EU. Key projects:
- **Led behavioural economics experiments** for project on human-robot interactions, overseeing participant recruitment, testing, and data management, collaborating with software and administrative teams (Link to paper)
- Assisted on a project examining value capture by GAFAM investments in EU, focusing on quantitative analysis and policy implications (with Helena Malikova, EU DG-COMP)
- **Co-authored paper** (https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/cmfvb_v1) on economic insecurity and trust (selected for European Political Science Association 2022, Prague and Intl Conference on Social Dilemmas 2022, Copenhagen)

Athena Infonomics   *May 17 - Mar 18*
Associate

- **Coordinated field research and data analysis** for projects aimed at improving sanitation usage in Ghana in collaboration with World Bank (Link)
- Designed and validated survey instruments for data collection from individuals and financial institutions, using ODK
- Worked on project proposals, grant proposals and business development activities in the area of Health, Education and Sanitation

Indian Institute of Management Bangalore (IIM-B)   *Mar 18 - Mar 19*
Research Associate

- **Primary contributor to two projects for the Ministry of Urban Development**, Government of India - a. Analyzing citizen feedback of 20 Infrastructure Projects for Smart Cities Mission, b. Policy Note on citizen engagement in Indian Infrastructure Projects
- As part of Directors Team - a) Handling **external communication and PR,** b) Creation of communication (ex: newspaper reports) and presentation material, c) Operational support in organizing meetings and workshops
- **Teaching Assistant** for courses on Infrastructure Financing and Development in India

Academic Experience

Teaching Assistant, Causal Inference, Hertie School   *Feb 22 - May 22*
- Planned and taught bi-weekly interactive lab sessions focusing on the practical application of causal inference methods in Social Sciences using R with Professor Will Lowe to Master of Data Science for Public Policy students

Research Assistant, Hertie School Data Science Lab   *Dec 20 - June 21*
- Worked on NLP project to identify climate change advocacy in UNSC speeches across different countries with Professor Slava Jankin and Dr. Hannah Bechara

Publications

- **Vishali Sairam,** Apurv Mehra, Kashish Mittal, BlendNet: An Assisted Digital Distribution Platform for Underserved Population. **Accepted to ACM SIGCAS/SIGCHI Conference on Computing and Sustainable Societies, 2024**
- Vishali Sairam, Vincent Heddesheimer & Joanna Bryson. (2022). Economic Insecurity Increases Polarization and Decreases Trust. 10.31235/osf.io/cmfvb. **(selected for European Political Science Association 2022, Prague and Intl Conference on Social Dilemmas 2022, Copenhagen)**
- Literature Review and data collection for book on political economy authored by Dr. S. Narayan, former Chief Economic Advisor, Govt of India (ISBN-100199488177)

References

- Nishtha Kochhar, Economist, World Bank (nkochhar@worldbank.org)
- Joanna Bryson, Professor of Ethics and Technology, Hertie School (bryson@hertie-school.org)
- Apurv Mehra, Founder, BlendNet.ai (apurv@blendnet.ai)