Northwestern | GLOBAL POVERTY RESEARCH LAB

Spring Quarter 2021

Philippines Panel Survey to Launch in Fall 2021

geographic cluster news

The Global Poverty Research Lab is launching a panel survey in the Philippines in fall 2021 as part of our geographic cluster there. We are partnering with IPA Philippines to collect data on more than 6,000 families across the island of Panay and the province of Negros Occidental. The sample of participants will be drawn randomly from among the rural barangays (the smallest administrative division in the Philippines) in these two regions.

This is an opportunity for researchers to work with us to:
- Plan and implement experiments that can take advantage of long-term tracking with follow up surveys planned every 3-4 years
- Propose research on survey and measurement methods

GPRL employs a cluster approach built around a simple principle: we can produce more and better research by creating a common infrastructure upon which to then engage in research and policy work.

The cluster approach distinguishes GPRL from other development economics academic centers by recognizing that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts: For geographic clusters multiple projects in the same location generate more knowledge by examining complementarities and taking advantage of common infrastructure.

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Geographic clusters involve a long-term commitment to research collaboration between local institutions, policy makers, and academic researchers. The lab's collection of long-term panel data is the core of all research efforts in each cluster. Such data provide detailed, multi-level, long-term scientific information on the same set of individuals over time and describe both the natural and built environment in which these individuals reside. This data collection also substantially furthers the lab's understanding of how one intervention affects the outcome of other interventions, generates insightful new questions, and enhances the lab's engagement with locals and other stakeholders. The absence of such data has proven a major constraint in understanding development in low-income countries.

Visit our website for more information about our clusters - both geographic and sectoral.

GPRL in the news

Coverage of our research in various news outlets

The Pandemic Pushed This Farmer Into Deep Poverty. Then Something Amazing Happened
by Malaka Gharib | NPR

What A 30,000-Person Survey Reveals About Day-To-Day Life In The Pandemic
by Malaka Gharib | NPR

A Clever Strategy to Distribute Covid Aid—With Satellite Data
by Tom Simonite | Wired

UPCOMING EVENT

MWIEDC 2021:

The Midwest International Economic Development Conference

Friday, April 30 & Saturday, May 1
This event will be conducted virtually via Zoom

Register online

The Global Poverty Research Lab is hosting the 18th annual MWIEDC, an economic development conference featuring presentations by scholars (both graduate students and faculty) covering topics such as agriculture, conflict, education, environment, financial development, gender, health, intimate partner violence, labor, and more.

FEATURED WORKING PAPERS

visit our website to see all GPRL working papers

Respondent Biases in Household Surveys

Andrew Dillon (GPRL) and Edouard Romeo Mensah (University of Georgia)
March 2021

If you wanted to know how many hours a household spends working on their farm, should you ask the household head to answer for the entire family, or are you better off asking each household member to individually report their hours worked? The former option is faster, but may lead to less accurate information. This working paper measures respondent bias, namely the tendency for participants to give inaccurate answers to survey questions, through a randomized controlled trial in Burkina Faso. Identical survey questions on household-level outcomes – such as land size, hours worked, and crop production – were asked to either the household head or a randomly chosen adult in the household, and then compared to self-reported data from each household member. The results find that for most agricultural variables, respondents struggle to account for the contributions of all household members.

Guns and Roses: Flower Exports and Electoral Violence in Kenya

Christopher Ksoll (University of Greenwich), Rocco Macchiavello (London School of Economics), and Ameet Morjaria (GPRL)
February 2021

How do firms adapt to withstand disruptions caused by violent conflicts, particularly predictable periods of violence that often precede elections in parts of Africa? This working paper investigates how Kenyan flower exporters reacted to the 2008 electoral violence: on the supply side, worker absences led to a 57% reduction in exports, while on the demand side, international buyers could not shift sourcing flowers from regions in Kenya less affected by violence, or to Ethiopia.Anticipating similar supply chain disruptions ahead of the 2013 elections, firms in direct contractual relationships ramped up shipments just before the election to mitigate disruption risks. As the flower trade's success in Kenya has led to the industry growing throughout the region, policymakers in countries prone to instability might to promote the adoption of strong export relationships, since these firms quickly respond to violence.

ADDITIONAL RECENT WORKING PAPERS

Land Measurement Bias: Comparisons from Global Positioning System, Self-Reports, and Remote Sensing Data
Andrew Dillon (PRL) and Lakshman Nagraj Rao (Asian Development Bank)
February 2021

A Call for Structured Ethics Appendices in Social Science Papers
Edward Asiedu (University of Ghana), Dean Karlan (GPRL), Monica Lambon-Quayefio (University of Ghana), and Christopher Udry (GPRL)
January 2021

Consumer Protection for Financial Inclusion in Low and Middle Income Countries: Bridging Regulator and Academic Perspectives
Seth Garz (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation), Xavier Giné (World Bank), Dean Karlan (GPRL), Rafe Mazer (IPA), Caitlin Sanford (IPA), and Jonathan Zinman (Dartmouth)
December 2020

GPRL Staff Interview

Peter Lugthart
Senior Research Analyst

Peter Lugthart joined GPRL as a research analyst (RA) in the summer of 2018 after graduating from Williams College. He was recently promoted to senior research analyst, a role in which he has taken on greater independence and leadership including taking an active role in the hiring process for new RAs, mentoring RAs, building resources to centralize knowledge in the RA team, and organizing research meetings to enable discussions of the latest development research. He has been admitted to a number of PhD programs in economics and applied economics including UC Berkeley's ARE program (though he is still deciding which one to enter in the fall).

The following is a summary of an interview with Peter.

What got you interested in development economics?
I became interested in development economics in an undergrad course called "Water as a Scarce Resource." The course focused on understanding water allocation systems in various domestic and international contexts. So a big part of it related to the role of water in development in countries including Columbia and India.

What projects are you are working on right now or in the last 6 months?
I've been working on a project in Namibia for a couple of years and it's getting ready for publication. The project examines the tragedy of the commons as it relates to communal land used for grazing. Individual cattle owners have an incentive to exploit the communal lands for their own cattle because they share the costs. The theory is that those communal lands become over-exploited.The government of Namibia and the Millennial Challenge Corporation (MCC) sponsored the project to provide a series of trainings and agricultural extension support. Trainers educate community about not overgrazing and using a plan to prevent overgrazing. The study questioned whether this can improve the health of the range land and improve income from cattle and household consumption. The results indicated that people did in fact create grazing plans and started to more actively herd cattle rather than letting cattle roam and graze wherever, but there was no increase in income nor an improvement to the health of the grass. In this context cooperative management is not sufficient in and of itself to solve this problem of improving health of grass and consumption/income. It's not entirely clear why this is.

How did you contribute to the project?
I joined after data collection so I foused on cleaning and analyzing the data from the many surveys for grazing managers, village leaders, households, surveys of the range land, and surveys measuring the cattle. I put all these surveys into 1-2 data sets that are easy to use to enable the analysis, supported the work on the final report for the grant, supported writing the paper by making tables, formatting the paper, and ensuring it's compliant with publication guidelines.

What did you learn from this project?
Coming into GPRL I had some interest in land use and the intersection of ecology and economics, so this project was really interesting. It helped shape which grad programs I considered. One of the main lessons I took from this study is that it's difficult to know why a project works or why it doesn't because there are so many variables that can impact the results. It's really important to make sure you can set up an experimental design that tells you whether or not your program works so you can get a definitive answer at the end. Reliance on self-reporting is challenging and it's important to observe the outcomes from as many dimensions as possible.

What is one question you want to answer once you're leading your own research as a PI?
I've been thinking about a project that I wrote up in my NSF GRFP proposal, which asks whether the conservation easements are effective at preventing development in environmentally important areas. Conservation easements are voluntary agreements in which land owners give up rights to develop their land in return for state and federal tax breaks. But there isn't great evidence for whether people who do ease their land are typically planning to develop or sell it. If not, the tax breaks are sort of a giveaway. This research would be focused on a domestic context, but I think there are applications for this work internationally as well, since similar voluntary conservation programs are becoming popular in other countries.