

# Idris Kambala Mohammed

[iddrisu.kambala@grad.moore.sc.edu](mailto:iddrisu.kambala@grad.moore.sc.edu) [www.iddrisukambala.com](http://www.iddrisukambala.com) +18037711427

Darla Moore School of Business, University of South Carolina

U.S. Permanent Resident (Green Card)

*Research fields:* Applied Microeconomics; Development Economics; Political Economy; Economic History

---

## Education

Ph.D. in Economics, University of South Carolina (USC)	2020 – Present
M.A. in Economics, Ibn Haldun University	May 2020
B.A. in Economics, Istanbul University	May 2018
B.A. in Public Finance (Second Major), Istanbul University	May 2018

---

## Publications

### Peer-reviewed

- Colonial Origins of Comparative Development in Ghana. *Journal of Development Studies*, 59(2), 188–208, 2023. [doi](#)  
– Featured in *The Conversation*. [See here](#).
- The Impact of Precolonial Political Centralisation on Local Development: Ghana’s Paradox. *Oxford Development Studies*, 51(2), 163–178, 2023. [doi](#)  
– Recipient of the *Sanjaya Lall Prize for 2023–24*

### Working papers

- The Long-run Effects of Africa’s Wave of Democratization (**Job Market Paper**). [link](#)  
Presented at:
  - *94th Southern Economic Association*, Washington, DC, Nov. 23–25, 2024.
  - *Univ. of Oxford Center for the Study of African Economies*, Oxford, UK, Mar. 17–19, 2024.
- Governing from Below: The Impact of Subnational Governance Quality on Wellbeing. [link](#)
- Early-life Adversity and Long-term Outcomes: Evidence from the Cocoa Swollen Shoot Virus Outbreak in the Gold Coast. [link](#) (Under Review at *World Development*)
- Understanding the Temporal and Spatial Trend of Work-at-home in the United States – with Wang, S. (University of South Carolina) [link](#)
- Climate Shocks and the Fracturing of Social Cohesion – with Jakaria, M. (University of South Carolina) [link](#)
- Interplay Roles of Telework and Climate Hazard Risks in Recent Migration Trends. – with Wang, S. (University of South Carolina) & Panta, D. (University of South Carolina) [link](#) (R&R at *Population, Space and Place*)
- Global Patterns of Religious Financial Exclusion – with Andani, M.H. (Ibn Haldun University) & Mohseni-Cheraghlou, A. (American University) [link](#)

### Works in progress

- African Mining Economies and Local Support for Democracy.

- From Missions to Migration: The Long-Term Impact of Missionaries on Brain Drain in Africa.
  - Not All Gaps Close: Colonial Roots of Schooling Inequality in Ghana, 1900–1999.
- 

## Conferences and Seminars

- The Long-run Effects of Africa’s Wave of Democratization. *94th Southern Economic Association*, Washington, DC, Nov. 23–25, 2024.
  - Roads, Local Growth and Agricultural Production in the Gold Coast. *1st Annual Symposium, Dept. of Economics, USC*, Columbia, SC, Apr. 12, 2024.
  - The Long-run Effects of Africa’s Wave of Democratization. *Univ. of Oxford CSAE*, Oxford, UK, Mar. 17–19, 2024.
  - Democratization and Long-run Development: Evidence from Africa’s Star Democracy. *93rd SEA*, New Orleans, LA, Nov. 18–20, 2023.
  - Democratic Governance and Long-run Development: Evidence from a Natural Experiment. *SEEDS Conference*, Atlanta, GA, Apr. 27–28, 2023.
  - Democratic Governance and Long-run Development: Evidence from a Natural Experiment. *USC Economics Brownbag*, Columbia, SC, Feb. 15, 2023.
  - Colonial Origins of Comparative Development in Ghana. *91st SEA*, Houston, TX, Nov. 20–22, 2021.
  - Colonial Origins of Comparative Development in Ghana. *Graduate Conf. on Social Sciences*, Ibn Haldun Univ., Istanbul, Turkey, May 5, 2020.
- 

## Professional Experience

### Industry

- Economist PhD Intern, **Amazon** Summer 2025  
– Developed and applied econometric designs (SDiD, DiD, RDiT, event studies) to estimate the causal impact of large-scale cataloging changes on product sales and customer engagement.

### Research

- Research Assistant, **Division of Research, DMSB, USC** Fall 2022–Present  
– Internationalization of South Carolina’s Economy; Spatial distribution of FDI in the U.S.
- Research Assistant, **Dr. Kathleen Broussard**, Sociology, USC Fall 2024–Present  
– Unrealized fertility in the U.S.; Changing dynamics of large families.
- Research Assistant, **Dr. Sicheng Wang**, Geography, USC Spring 2024  
– Work-at-home trends in the U.S.; Telework, climate risk, and migration.

## Teaching

### Instructor of Record, USC

- Honors Thesis Fall 2025; Spring 2026
- Introduction to Economics Spring 2024; Fall 2024; Spring 2025

### Teaching Assistant, USC

- Public Economics; Industrial Organization; Applied Macroeconomics; intermediate Macroe-

## Awards, Grants, and Honors

- Sanjay Lall Award (Best Article), *Oxford Development Studies*, 2024.
  - Graduate Student Award, Southern Economic Association, 2023.
  - International Conference Travel Grant, USC Graduate School, 2023.
  - Third-year Paper Completion Fellowship, USC Economics, 2023.
  - Best Paper Award, Graduate Conference on Social Sciences, Ibn Haldun University, 2020.
  - Turkish Government Undergraduate Scholarships, 2013–2018.
- 

## Technical Skills

- **Programming Languages:** Python; R; SQL.
  - **Software:** Stata; ArcGIS (ArcMap); L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X.
  - **Certificates:** Google Data Analytics; IBM Data Analysis with Python.
- 

## Media & Outreach

- *The Conversation*: “Northern Ghana is underdeveloped because of underinvestment during colonial rule, not geography.” [link](#)
- 

## References

### Douglas Woodward (Chair)

Department of Economics  
University of South Carolina  
[woodward@moore.sc.edu](mailto:woodward@moore.sc.edu)  
+1 (803) 629 2923

### Crystal Zhan

Department of Economics  
University of South Carolina  
[crystal.zhan@moore.sc.edu](mailto:crystal.zhan@moore.sc.edu)  
+1 (803) 777 4356

### Andres Marroquin

Stetson-Hatcher School of Business  
Mercer University  
[marroquin\\_a@mercerc.edu](mailto:marroquin_a@mercerc.edu)  
+1 (478) 318 7602

## Dissertation Abstracts

### **The Long-run Effects of Africa’s Wave of Democratization (Job Market Paper)**

I investigate the long-run effects of Africa’s 1990s democratization wave on economic performance and development. Using a dynamic panel fixed effects model, I first document a robust positive relationship between democratization and income per capita. I find that being in a democratic regime, as opposed to a nondemocratic one, is associated with a 1.2% higher income per capita, while a full-range increase in the liberal democracy index from 0 to 1 raises income per capita by 13%. To isolate the causal impact of democratization on long-run development, I exploit African borders that partition historically and culturally homogeneous ethnic groups into present-day consolidated democracies and nondemocracies. In this exercise, I first present grid cell-level panel fixed effects estimates showing a robust positive impact of democratization on subnational development, measured by nighttime light density. I then employ a within-ethnicity geographic regression discontinuity design to compute the development disparities across democratic and nondemocratic partitions over time. I find that democratic and nondemocratic partitions were initially at similar levels of development, but democratic partitions experienced sustained gains over time, leading to persistent divergence. By 2013, grid cells in democratic partitions were about 7 percentage points more likely to have light at night relative to their nondemocratic counterparts. Using individual-level survey data, I further show that democratization improves human development, particularly years of schooling, formal education access, and higher education completion, as well as other socioeconomic outcomes including economic security, employment, and access to public goods.

### **Governing from Below: The Impact of Subnational Governance Quality on Wellbeing**

Research has extensively demonstrated the importance of national governance quality for economic performance and societal wellbeing. Yet, such aggregate analyses often overlook the impact of subnational governance, the level of government closest to the people. Consequently, we know little about the relationship between subnational governance quality (SGQ) and socioeconomic outcomes. This study examines how perceived SGQ – capturing local government performance, responsiveness, trustworthiness, and corruption – influences subjective wellbeing using individual-level survey data from more than 223,000 respondents across 40 African countries. OLS estimates show that a one-standard-deviation increase in SGQ decreases economic insecurity – an index of shortages in food, water, fuel, medical care, and cash income – by about 3 percentage points (pp) and increases the probability of reporting “fairly good” or “very good” living conditions about 7 pp. Because these estimates may be biased due to potential endogeneity, I construct a leave-out-one mean instrument that averages the governance evaluations of *all other* community members to instrument for an individual’s own assessment. Using this instrument, the results confirm the causal impact of SGQ on subjective wellbeing. Specifically, a one-standard deviation increase in SGQ

reduces economic insecurity by over 5 pp and increases the likelihood of reporting “fairly good” or “very good” living conditions by about 14 pp. These findings suggest that improving governance at the subnational level can lead to meaningful improvements in individual wellbeing.

## **Early-life Adversity and Long-term Outcomes: Evidence from the Cocoa Swollen Shoot Virus Outbreak in the Gold Coast**

A large body of work highlights that early-life conditions shape adult outcomes. However, most of this evidence comes from developed economies where safety nets are robust. Moreover, much of the existing literature focuses on broad, economy-wide shocks, with limited attention to sector-specific disruptions. This study addresses these gaps by investigating the long-term effects of early-life exposure to an agricultural epidemic in a low-income setting with weak social protection. Specifically, I examine the long-term impact of the cocoa swollen shoot virus disease (CSSVD) epidemic, which devastated the Gold Coast’s (now Ghana) cocoa sector in the 1940s. The CSSVD caused severe yield and income losses and led to compulsory cocoa farm destruction in an environment with little institutional support. Using historical archives and georeferenced survey data, I exploit variation in exposure to the epidemic based on birth timing and ecological suitability for cocoa cultivation to estimate its long-term effects on human capital and labor market outcomes. I find that early-life exposure to the epidemic is associated with persistent human capital deficits. Affected children experienced a 1.1-year loss in schooling (a 23 percent reduction) and a 9.3 percentage point (pp) reduction in attaining any level of formal education (17 percent reduction). They also exhibited a 5.8 pp higher likelihood of morbidity (an 18.8 percent increase) and a 4.6 pp higher probability of living with a disability in adulthood (a 25.7 percent increase). The epidemic, however, had no robust, consistent long-term effects on labor market outcomes.