

Idris Kambala Mohammed

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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)	May 2026
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

- Interplay Roles of Telework and Climate Hazard Risks in Recent Migration Trends in the United States — with Wang, S. & Panta, D. *Population, Space and Place*, 32(4), e70272, 2026. [doi](#)
- 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. [link](#)
- 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](#) (R&R at *World Development*)
- Climate Shocks and the Fracturing of Social Cohesion — with Jakaria, M. [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 — with Andani, M. H.
 - Not All Gaps Close: Colonial Roots of Schooling Inequality in Ghana, 1900–1999.
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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.
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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

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

Teaching Assistant, USC

- Public Economics; Industrial Organization; Applied Macroeconomics; intermediate Macroeconomics; Labor Economics; Money and Banking.
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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.
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Technical Skills

- **Programming Languages:** Python; R; SQL.
 - **Software:** Stata; ArcGIS (ArcMap); L^AT_EX.
 - **Certificates:** Google Data Analytics; IBM Data Analysis with Python.
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Media & Outreach

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

Douglas Woodward (Chair)

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Dissertation Abstracts

The Long-run Effects of Africa’s Wave of Democratization

I investigate how Africa’s democratization wave of the early 1990s influenced economic performance and long-term development at the national, subnational, and individual levels. At the national level, I find that a transition from nondemocracy to democracy is associated with 1.2 percent higher income per capita, while a full-range increase in the liberal democracy index from 0 to 1 corresponds to a 13 percent increase in income per capita. These income gains operate through improvements in physical capital accumulation, trade openness, human capital formation, and economic liberalization. To strengthen causal identification, I exploit Africa’s colonial borders, which arbitrarily divided ethnically homogeneous communities into present-day consolidated democracies and nondemocracies. This identification strategy allows me to examine the impact of democratization on subnational development and on individual living conditions. Grid cell-level panel fixed effects estimates show that democratization significantly raises subnational development as proxied by nighttime light density. Employing a within-ethnicity geographic regression discontinuity design, I track development disparities from 1992 to 2013. The main results show that while both sides of the border started at comparable development levels in the early 1990s, democratic partitions experienced sustained gains thereafter, becoming 7 percentage points (pp) more likely to have light at night by 2013, representing a 37 percent increase relative to the sample mean. Individual-level survey evidence further shows that residents of democratic partitions report substantially lower economic insecurity, higher educational attainment, greater waged employment, and significantly better access to public infrastructure.

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

This study examines how the quality of local governance causally influences individual wellbeing, a relationship systematically overlooked in studies focused on national-level institutions. Using survey data from more than 223,000 respondents across 40 African countries, I construct a subnational governance quality index capturing citizens’ perceptions of their Local Government Councils across four dimensions: general performance, responsiveness, trustworthiness, and perceived corruption. OLS estimates show that a one-standard-deviation increase in subnational governance quality reduces economic insecurity by approximately 3 pp and raises the probability of reporting good living conditions by about 7 pp. To address endogeneity from reverse causality and omitted variables, I instrument for individual governance assessments using a leave-out-one community mean, which averages the perceptions of all other residents in the same community. IV estimates confirm that higher governance quality causally reduces economic insecurity by over 5 pp and raises the probability of good living conditions by approximately 14 pp. These effects attenuate in rural areas, strengthen with education and waged employment, and show no meaningful differences by gender. The mechanisms analysis shows that better governance encourages civic participation, strengthens institutional trust, and improves access to locally managed social services.

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

This paper investigates the lasting consequences of early-life exposure to a sector-specific economic shock in a low-income setting without formal safety nets. While existing research documents persistent effects of biological shocks such as famines and pandemics, much less is known about shocks that operate purely through income disruption. This study addresses that gap by examining the long-term effects of the Cocoa Swollen Shoot Virus Disease, an agricultural epidemic that devastated cocoa production in the Gold Coast during the 1940s and operated entirely through income loss rather than direct biological harm. Exploiting variation in exposure across time and space, I find that exposure during early childhood reduced years of schooling by approximately one year and lowered the probability of obtaining any formal education by 8.5 pp. Exposure during school-going years reduced years of schooling by 0.8 years and the probability of formal education by 7 pp. Exposure is also associated with significantly worse adult health outcomes, increasing morbidity by 6.2 to 8.5 pp and disability by 5 to 7.5 pp. In contrast, there is no systematic evidence of long-term effects on labor market participation. Evidence on mechanisms points to disruptions in school progression and a shift toward agricultural employment in adulthood, consistent with reduced access to skill-intensive opportunities rather than labor market exit.