

# Ishita Ahmed, PhD

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## SUMMARY

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- **Applied economist and researcher** integrating quantitative econometric and psychometric methods to evaluate impacts of social protection and education programs on livelihoods and child development in Bangladesh, Ghana, and Tanzania.
- **Experienced in large-scale RCT analysis and cost-effectiveness evaluation** and collaborating with international research teams to develop rigorous, comparable methodologies that identify effective and scalable policies.
- **Combines field and analytical expertise with a community-based, mixed-methods approach** to identify local development priorities and disseminate findings to policymakers and partners.

## EDUCATION

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**PhD**, International Comparative Education and Developmental and Psychological Sciences, **Stanford University** 2025

**MA**, Economics with a focus in Development and Behavioral Economics, **University of Maryland College Park** 2018

**BA**, Magna Cum Laude, Economics and International Relations, **The College of William & Mary** 2011

## RESEARCH AND EVALUATION EXPERIENCE

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**Postdoctoral Scholar, SPARK Lab, Stanford University** August 2025-present

- Pilot novel tablet-based curiosity and creativity measures in partnership with Head Start and Bay Area school districts.
- Conduct psychometric analyses and data visualization in R to assess validity and reliability of novel measures.
- Synthesize and communicate findings to Gates and Walton foundations to inform broader dissemination and research use.

**Research Consultant, Dr. Rachel Glennerster, Center for Global Development** October 2023-present

- Develop and pilot a standardized numeracy and literacy test item bank to enable cross-RCT comparisons of cost-effectiveness on a common scale.
- Conduct psychometric analyses to calibrate items and estimate RCT impacts as learning adjusted years of schooling.
- Design and disseminate methodologies for comparable cost-effectiveness estimation across the Abdul Jameel Poverty Action Lab and What Works Hub for Education networks.

**Doctoral Student Researcher, Stanford University** September 2019-2025

- Analyzed large-scale RCT data in STATA and authored a *WBER* revise and resubmit identifying that early intervention sustains long-run child development impacts of cash and food transfers with nutrition education in Bangladesh.
- Collected and analyzed mixed methods data from 102 caregiver-child dyads and led a qualitative coding team to examine community perspectives on what skills are central to successful livelihoods in Bangladesh.
- Developed and validated novel executive function measure for children based on community feedback in Bangladesh.
- Examined heterogeneous RCT impacts to inform cost-effectiveness analysis using a novel application of differential item functioning analysis in R to item-level data.
- Presented methodological and policy-relevant research at academic conferences for researchers and practitioners.

**Research Assistant, Dr. Isaac Mbiti, University of Virginia** June 2018-August 2019

- Analyzed RCT data in STATA for papers on teacher incentives and vocational training in Kenya, Tanzania, and Ghana.
- Collaborated on impact evaluation of national curriculum reform to assess student learning outcomes in Tanzania.

**Research Assistant, Dr. Pascaline Dupas, Stanford University** August 2013-September 2016

- Analyzed RCT data in STATA from 2,050 youth respondents and their households in Ghana.
- Conducted initial cost-effectiveness analysis of secondary school scholarship impacts on children's livelihoods.
- Managed survey design and implementation across 400 junior high and secondary schools in Ghana.

## FIELD AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION EXPERIENCE

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### Field Coordinator, The World Bank Group

October 2015-August 2016

- Implemented the Energy Sector Management Assistance Program Multi-Tier Energy Access Tracking Framework on a global scale across 20-30 different countries.
- Led team to design and finalize questionnaire measuring energy access using a multi-tier approach.
- Collaborated to develop the methodological report and sampling strategy for the survey.
- Managed survey activities: selected survey firms, trained enumerators, conducted data collection and cleaning.

### Project Associate, Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), Accra, Ghana

July 2012-July 2013

- Managed follow-up survey for RCT to estimate the returns to secondary education with Dr. Pascaline Dupas, Dr. Esther Duflo, and Dr. Michael Kremer.
- Designed, piloted, and implemented survey instrument for 2,050 youth respondents and their guardians across six southern regions of Ghana with 98% of respondents successfully tracked and surveyed.
- Supervised field operations, recruited and trained staff, and monitored data quality.
- Managed daily project finances and operational budget of US\$250,000 for project activities.

### Intern, Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), Dhaka, Bangladesh

January 2012-May 2012

- Assisted Dr. Mushfiq Mobarak and Dr. Raymond Guiteras with a RCT to evaluate the impact of demand and supply interventions on the adoption of improved sanitation in rural Bangladesh.
- Designed and piloted surveys, trained and supervised 54 enumerators, and managed survey for 8,400 households.
- Collaborated with NGO partners to implement interventions for 18,250 households.

### Intern, UN World Food Programme (WFP), Dhaka, Bangladesh

August 2011-December 2011

- Collaborated to design and implement RCT to evaluate food and cash transfers and nutrition education.
- Assisted in training NGO workers, conducting baseline surveys, and monitoring beneficiary selection for an emergency operation to assist flood victims in Satkhira district of Bangladesh.
- Drafted assessment reports and case studies for dissemination to ambassadors and government officials.

## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

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[Impacts of cash, food, and nutrition behavior change communication on long-run child development: Experimental evidence from Bangladesh](#)

Revise and resubmit at *The World Bank Economic Review*. Evidence on how early intervention timing and complementary nutrition education sustains long-run child development impacts of cash and food transfers.

[Heterogeneity of item-treatment interactions masks complexity and generalizability in randomized controlled trials](#)

Published in *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*. Promotes item-level analysis to estimate RCT cost-effectiveness.

[Behavior change communication activities improve infant and young child nutrition knowledge and practice of neighboring non-participants in a cluster-randomized trial in rural Bangladesh](#)

Published in *PLoS ONE*. Identifies importance of assessing intervention spillover effects to estimate community-level impact.

## SKILLS

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- **Software:** STATA, R, MPlus, LaTeX, Dedoose, Atlas.ti, otter.ai
- **Languages:** Fluent in English, conversant in Bengali, and elementary proficiency in Spanish and French

## REFERENCES

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- Dr. Pascaline Dupas, Economics Department, Princeton University, [pdupas@princeton.edu](mailto:pdupas@princeton.edu)
- Dr. Jelena Obradović, Graduate School of Education, Stanford University, [jelenao@stanford.edu](mailto:jelenao@stanford.edu)
- Dr. Dana McCoy, Graduate School of Education, Harvard University, [dana\\_mccoy@gse.harvard.edu](mailto:dana_mccoy@gse.harvard.edu)