

Ishita Ahmed, PhD

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SUMMARY

- Learning scientist and applied researcher with 10+ years of experience designing and evaluating learning experiences using experimental and mixed-methods approaches.
- Expertise in building and iterating measurement systems and learning tasks through rapid pilot cycles, integrating user behavior data and psychometric analysis to inform product decisions.
- Proven ability to partner with cross-functional teams to translate complex analyses into actionable insights that improve learning outcomes at scale.

EDUCATION

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

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

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

PRODUCT AND LEARNING RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Postdoctoral Scholar, [MAGIC Project](#), **Stanford University**

August 2025-present

- Collaborate to design and iterate on 8 tablet-based tasks measuring curiosity, creativity, and problem solving for children ages 3-8 across multiple pilot cycles
- Analyze behavioral interaction data (e.g., timing, response patterns) to identify learning metrics and improve usability and engagement
- Build R pipelines processing hundreds of interactions per pilot to inform task iteration to improve design and instructions
- Partner with educators and schools across Head Start centers and schools to collect data and translate research findings
- Deliver findings to funders (Gates and Walton Family Foundation) to inform scaling and product strategy decisions
- Mentor and train two junior researchers in statistical programming and measurement validation

Research Consultant, **Dr. Rachel Glennerster**, **Center for Global Development**

October 2023-present

- Design and lead pilot studies of learning assessments across 60 schools in Ghana, India, and Pakistan to enable cross-context comparison of learning outcomes
- Build scalable data systems supporting analysis of thousands of student assessment records
- Develop analytic tools to support cost-effectiveness and impact comparisons across programs to inform funding decisions
- Advise research teams across J-PAL and What Works Hub networks on evaluation design and measurement strategies

Doctoral Student Researcher, **Stanford University**

September 2019-2025

- Designed and analyzed a large-scale RCT with 3,000 households to identify 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 mixed-methods analysis in Bangladesh
- Advanced methodological innovation to examine heterogeneous RCT impacts by applying differential item functioning analysis to item-level data from 15 RCTs in R
- 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

- Managed data analysis for RCTs in STATA 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 longitudinal RCT data in STATA from 2,050 youth respondents and their households in Ghana to assess long-term impacts of secondary education interventions
- Conducted initial cost-effectiveness analysis of secondary school scholarship impacts on children's livelihoods
- Managed survey design, sampling strategy, and data quality protocols across 400 schools in Ghana

FIELD RESEARCH AND IMPLEMENTATION EXPERIENCE

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 longitudinal data collection for 2,050 participants and achieved a 98% tracking rate across survey waves
- Designed and piloted survey instruments used to evaluate long-term returns to secondary education
- Supervised field teams and managed project operations for a \$250K budget

PRODUCT EXPERIMENTATION AND METHODS

Experimental design (A/B testing, quasi-experimental) • Learning metrics & psychometrics • Behavioral data analysis
Rapid prototyping & iteration • Mixed-methods research • Stakeholder communication

TECHNICAL SKILLS

R, Stata, MPlus • Causal inference • Experimental design • Item response theory

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

[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 impacts on child development from 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 impact heterogeneity.

[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 using network data to estimate community-level impact.