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Leading African research in overcoming inequality



ACEIR is a research centre of the African Research Universities Alliance and is hosted by the University of Cape Town. With country partners in eastern, western and southern Africa, we aim to contribute to deep, multidimensional and interdisciplinary understandings of inequality in each country context, and a continental and global understanding of how inequalities can be overcome.



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ACEIR NEWS BULLETIN

August 2025

This issue of our quarterly news bulletin was carried over by a month to accommodate the inclusion of several noteworthy events and other announcements on ACEIR's work. These include:

- A seminar series on inequalities in sub-Saharan Africa over the coming months.
- A new training course in longitudinal data analysis in Africa.
- Our team's contributions to the annual summer school of the Africa-Europea Cluster of Research Excellence in Inequalities, Poverty, and Deprivation.

- The head of our Ghana research node appointed as director of ACEIR's host institution at the University of Ghana.
- Announcement of the first ARUA Early Career Research Fellowship 2025 recipient who will spend six months at an ACEIR node.

We also share a short article and the recording of a dialogue on tackling inequality for sustainable growth and poverty reduction in Africa. The event was hosted jointly with a longstanding and much-valued partner, Agence Française de Développement, earlier this year.

In the capacity building section, several PhD candidates in the ACEIR team reflect on the value of enrolling for researcher development initiatives such as fellowships, conferences, and summer schools.

As usual, we also list new journal articles, conference papers, and opinion pieces by researchers at ACEIR's nodes at the University of Cape Town, University of Ghana, and University of Nairobi.

NEWS | Seminar series on African inequalities



Photo: Johnny Miller, [Unequal Scenes](#). Used with permission.

Starting this month, the ACEIR team is hosting a series of hybrid seminars on African inequalities. The seminars draw on a selection of chapters in *Inequalities in sub-Saharan Africa: Multidimensional perspectives and future challenges*. This book, which was published earlier this year as the 15th title in the Africa Development Forum series of the World Bank and Agence Française de Développement (AFD), represents a stock-take of several years of research with the AFD. [Read more](#)



Course participants with facilitators Nicola Branson (fourth from the left) and Emma Whitelaw (fourth from the right) with ISSER's director, Robert D. Osei (centre) and ACEIR director, Murray Leibbrandt (back).

Photo supplied by Emma Whitelaw.

Researchers in ACEIR's South Africa node have developed a new course on the analysis of panel surveys. The course is part of a project with ACEIR colleagues at the Institute of Statistical, Social, and Economic Research, University of Ghana. The course was designed around the use of the Ghana Socioeconomic Panel Survey (GSPS), which is similar to South Africa's National Income Dynamics Study. The project includes working with the GSPS team to enhance research possibilities using the data, which are shared in the public domain. The course was offered for the first time recently at the annual summer school of the Cluster of Research Excellence in Inequalities, Poverty, and Deprivation (CoRE IPD). [Read more](#)

NEWS | Contributions to summer school of cluster of research excellence



Some of the summer school participants and facilitators of the elective course on the roots of poverty, inequality, and deprivation in Africa. Photo supplied by Muna Shifa.

July marked the second CoRE IPD summer school as researchers from the cluster's partner universities curated and taught three elective courses to young and emerging African researchers over the course of two weeks. Annual summer schools are one of the CoRE IPD's key contributions to growing African research and teaching capacities as part of 21 clusters of research excellence set up to address the societal and scientific challenges outlined in a joint innovation agenda of the African and European Unions. ACEIR's three node universities are the African partners of the CoRE IPD. The school was hosted by ACEIR's Ghana node partner this year and ACEIR scholars from the Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa nodes made significant contributions to the school alongside their European counterparts. [Read more](#)

NEWS | Dialogue on tackling inequality for sustainable growth and poverty reduction in Africa



and ACEIR and Agence Française de Développement (AFD) hosted as a prelude to the

South Africa at 30 Years of Democracy conference. The conference was held in April by the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU) at the University of Cape Town where ACEIR's hub and South Africa node are located. The dialogue reflected on the intricate relationship between inequality, poverty, and economic growth policies and included input from the UN Economic Commission for Africa and the World Bank's Africa Region. [Read more](#) | [Watch recording](#)

CONGRATULATIONS | Prof. Robert Darko Osei



Photo: Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER), University of Ghana

The head of ACEIR's Ghana node, Prof. Robert D. Osei, has been appointed director of his academic home, the Institute of Statistical, Social, and Economic Research (ISSER) at the University of Ghana. ISSER is one of Africa's strongest nodes of training on methodologies of policy evaluation and one of the continent's largest survey data producers and archivers. The ACEIR team celebrates this appointment with Prof. Osei, a distinguished economist and a longstanding member of ISSER where he has contributed extensively to research, teaching, and policy engagement. He was dean of the university's School of Graduate Studies prior to this appointment. [Read more](#)

CAPACITY BUILDING | ARUA Early Career Research Fellowship 2025

Dr Fiennasah Annif' Akemas was awarded an ARUA Early Career Research Fellowship to spend six months at ACEIR. The fellowship programme is supported by the Mastercard Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York. It aims to enhance the capacity of early career researchers at African universities by providing them with time away from

distinguished researchers at ARUA centres of excellence. Dr Akemas focuses on gender disparities, financial inclusion, labour markets, and informal economies. She has chosen to spend her time at the ACEIR South Africa node at the University of Cape Town and will join that team in January 2026.



ARUA invites applications to the fellowship programme until a total of 42 early career researchers have been enrolled by December 2025. [Read more](#)

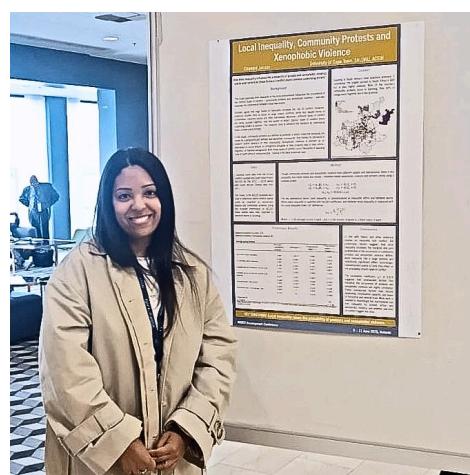
CAPACITY BUILDING | The value of capacity building opportunities for young researchers

One of the central pillars of ACEIR's work is to contribute to research and data capacity development that nurtures the growth of young and emerging African researchers. Three PhD candidates in the team share here some reflections on participating in such capacity building opportunities in the past months.

The importance of networking and local knowledge

Chandr   Jacobs, University of Cape Town

My three months in Helsinki, Finland, as a visiting PhD fellow at the United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER) were packed with engagements and learnings. I worked with a mentor on my thesis; attended research presentations at WIDER; and seminars and workshops at the Helsinki Graduate School of Economics, an academic initiative of three Finnish universities. Our cohort of PhD fellows also attended a short course on using spatial data that was organised by WIDER and participated in WIDER's 2025 summer school.



One of the things I realised while at WIDER is the importance of networking and its effect on publishing. But the major realisation during my time at WIDER, however, was the importance of local knowledge in doing empirical work. [Read more](#)

MOBILITY RESEARCH INSIGHTS

Aarifah Razak, University of Cape Town

Attending the University of Chicago conference and summer school on socioeconomic opportunity and inequality in Brazil in June, and engaging with scholars from diverse backgrounds, introduced me to new methodologies and frameworks in mobility research. Beyond the academic value, I was also exposed to a different urban environment in Brasília – a city designed to provide equal access to amenities for all residents. Becoming Brazil's capital in 1960, its aeroplane-shaped layout symbolised order and progress: government buildings in the “cockpit”, main roads in the “fuselage”, and residential blocks in the “wings”. Yet, navigating the car-centric city highlighted the disconnect between spatial ideals and lived reality. Lower-income residents remain in distant satellite areas, cut off from central amenities.

Appreciation for expertise of facilitators and participatory approach

Diana Nyachieo, University of Cape Town

I had the privilege of attending this year's CoRE IPD summer school that was hosted at the University of Ghana in July. In the first week, we looked at the roots of poverty, inequality and deprivation in Africa. Given that my thesis broadly focuses on inequality of outcomes, material covered in the first week was particularly illuminating. Two different electives were offered in the second week: panel data analysis, and impact evaluation; of which I chose the latter. We considered three main concepts in the impact evaluation course: non-experimental methods, quasi-experimental methods, and randomised



Long commutes and uneven access to services persist. Brasília is an example of how well-meaning, top-down planning can inadvertently reproduce the very inequalities it aims to address. This insight made me reflect more deeply on my research on the role of childhood place in shaping long-term mobility – not only in terms of where opportunity is located, but also how people are able to access it.



The wealth of experience embodied by the facilitators, coupled with the participatory approach applied in both weeks of the school, promoted an in-depth understanding of the material taught. It was indeed a big honour to be a part of the summer school, and I'd encourage those in the development

NEW PUBLICATIONS | Forthcoming Namibia inequality diagnostic

A new inequality diagnostic by ACEIR researchers at the South Africa node will be published by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in the near future. The research builds on ACEIR's series of inequality diagnostics by undertaking a comprehensive analysis of the different dimensions of inequalities in Namibia. The study has a special focus on inequalities in the world of work, and how these inequalities relate to other aspects of inequality and drivers outside of the world of work. The research team comprises members from ACEIR's South Africa node at the University of Cape Town, ILO experts, and local researchers. [Read about the project](#)

NEW PUBLICATIONS | Journal articles

Branson, N., & Whitelaw, E. 2025. Tracking progress towards gender equity in the South African academic economics pipeline. *South African Journal of Economics*, first published online 28 June 2025. <https://doi.org/10.1111/saje.70000>

Hartley, F., Merven, B., Hughes, A., Marquard, A., & **Ranchhod, V.** 2025. Estimating the economy-wide and redistributive impacts of mitigation in South Africa. *Climate and Development*, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17565529.2025.2491539>

Lambon-Quayefio, M., Merven, B., Hughes, A., **Hartley, F.**, & **Osei, R. D.** 2025. Estimating the distributive impacts of climate mitigation policies in the power sector in Ghana. *Energy for Sustainable Development*, 84, 101589. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esd.2024.101589>

Machio, P. M., Sallu, S. M., Waized, B., Mwanri, A. W., & K. G. Duodu. 2024. A gendered analysis of adaptive capacity and food security in Makueni County, Kenya. *Frontiers Sustainable Food Systems*, 8, published online 8 January 2025. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsufs.2024.1494475>

Metzler, A. B., Nathvani, R., Sharmanska, V., Bai, W., Moulds, S., **Owoo, N. S.**, Fynn, I. E. M., Muller, E., Dufitimana, E., Akara, G. K., Owusu, G., Agyei-Mensah, S., & Ezzati, M. 2025. Unsupervised deep clustering of high-resolution satellite imagery reveals phenotypes of urban development in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Science of The Total Environment*, 988(179739). <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0048969725013804>

Ogwang, T., & **Mwabu, G.** 2025 A simple measure of catastrophic health expenditures. 2025. *Health Economics*, first published online 25 June 2025. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hec.70007>

Riley, E., Shonchoy, A. S., & **Osei, R. D.** 2025. Incentives and endorsement for technology adoption: Evidence from mobile banking in Ghana. *Journal of Development Economics*, 176, Article 103511. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2025.103511>

Mosomi, J., **Shifa, M.**, Raub, A., & Heymann, J. 2025. *Disparities in access to paid leave and their implications for gender inequality: The case of South Africa*. Paper presented at the 30th International Population Conference, Brisbane, Australia, 16 July 2025.

Lam, A., & **Leibbrandt, M.** 2025. *The global labor market and the end of world population growth*. Paper presented at the 30th International Population Conference, Brisbane, Australia, 17 July 2025.

Lam, L., **Leibbrandt, M.**, Finn, A., & **Branson, N.** 2025. *Why has decreasing schooling inequality not led to decreasing earnings inequality in South Africa?* Paper presented at the 30th International Population Conference, Brisbane, Australia, 15 July 2025.

Branson, N., & **Whitelaw, E.** 2025. *Gendered trends in educational expansion, labour market dynamics, and wage returns in Ghana: Evidence from harmonised cross-sections*. Paper presented at the 30th International Population Conference, Brisbane, Australia, 15 July 2025.

OUR FOOTPRINT

IUSSP International Population Conference 2025

This annual conference of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population took place in Australia this year. Several ACEIR researchers presented papers. These include research on Africa's future working-age population (Prof. **Murray Leibbrandt**); Ghana's education expansion (Prof. **Nicola Branson**, Dr **Emma Whitelaw**); South Africa's decreasing schooling inequality (Prof. **Leibbrandt**, Prof. **Branson**), and access to paid leave in South Africa (Dr **Muna Shifa**). [Read more](#)

Conference and Summer School on Socioeconomic Opportunity and Inequality

Aarifah Razak presented at this conference in Brasília, Brazil. She shared early-stage work from her PhD paper on the geography of intergenerational mobility in South Africa and participated in

WIDER Development Conference 2025

Chandré Jacobs presented a research poster at this conference in Helsinki, Finland that dealt with the theme "Safeguarding tomorrow – innovative approaches to growth and equity". The poster included some preliminary results from her thesis, which looks at the interrelationships between inequality, protest action and xenophobic violence in South Africa. She also presented the same work at the Jan Tinbergen European Peace Science Conference in Barcelona in June, as well as thesis chapters on local inequality at an online ECINEQ PhD workshop.

SA-TIED Work-in-Progress Workshop

Chandré Jacobs presented on "Correcting survey-based inequality estimates: the case of South Africa", a joint paper with Prof. **Murray Leibbrandt** and Prof. Paul Segal (Argentine Austral University and International Inequalities

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by Brazil's Institute for Applied Economic Research, the International Inequalities Institute at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), and the Stone Center for Research on Wealth Inequality and Mobility, University of Chicago.

intergenerational mobility in South Africa. SA-TIED (Southern Africa – Towards Inclusive Economic Development) is a programme of research, capacity development, and policy influencing that is supported by UNU-WIDER and other governmental organisations in the Southern Africa region.

IN THE NEWS

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