

**ACEIR**  
AFRICAN CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE  
FOR INEQUALITY RESEARCH



**ARUA**  
African Research  
Universities Alliance



ACEIR is a research centre of the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) that is hosted by the University of Cape Town. With country partners in eastern, western and southern Africa, ACEIR aims 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

Fourth quarter, December 2023

The last quarter of ACEIR's fifth year concluded with high-profile policy discussions and exciting plans for the future. In this news bulletin, we reflect on:



- Organising and hosting a successful international conference on inequality, work, and nature in partnership with the Agence Française de Développement, the European Union, and the South African Presidency.
- Meeting with colleagues from three European universities to plan for the roll-out of the new Cluster of Research Excellence in Inequality, Poverty, and Deprivation.
- Hosting a public lecture with Kenya’s National Gender and Equality Commission and the German government’s development agency to discuss findings from a new report on Kenyan inequalities.
- Releasing a policy brief in aid of the Oxfam in Ghana advocacy project on leveraging fiscal policy to reduce inequality in that country.
- Participating in the fourth biennial conference of the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA), including facilitating an early career workshop on using panel data for poverty and inequality analyses.
- Receiving funding from the Gender, Growth, and Labour Markets in Low-Income Countries (G<sup>2</sup>LM|LIC) Programme for a research collaboration on the consequences of educational expansion in Ghana.

Also read about two new additions to the ACEIR working papers series and presentations on our research at various recent public engagements.

As we near the end of 2023, we extend our appreciation to our colleagues, research and funding partners, and government and other collaborators for your continued contributions to, support of, and encouragement for ACEIR’s research agenda. May 2024 bring us all the required stamina, insights, and innovation to continue chipping away at the injustices of poverty and inequality.



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NEWS | Tackling inequality and climate change simultaneously





A gathering of about 150 researchers, high-level government players and civil society and development practitioners presented a unique opportunity in November to debate the strategic dilemmas and policy solutions for a just transition to net-zero development pathways. With two days of conference side events and another two days of conference plenaries and parallel sessions where close to 50 research papers were presented, the knowledge exchanges proved invaluable to making sense of the interactions between inequalities and climate change and their impact on development. The conference was organised by the Agence Française de Développement, the European Union, the South African Presidency, and ACEIR’s hub that is based at the University of Cape Town.

[READ MORE](#)

NEWS | ACEIR research at the IWN conference

						
						
<p><b>Faaiqa Hartley</b>, University of Cape Town</p> <p><b>Dr Monica Lambon-Quayefio</b>, University of Ghana</p>	<p><b>Dr Fabio Andrés Díaz Pabón</b>, University of Cape Town</p>	<p><b>Prof. Damiano K. Manda</b>, University of Nairobi</p>	<p><b>Arindam Jana</b>, University of Cape Town</p>	<p><b>Dr Muna Shifa</b>, University of Cape Town</p> <p><b>Prof. Nkechi S. Owoo</b>, University of Ghana</p>	<p><b>Prof. Murray Leibbrandt</b>, University of Cape Town</p>	<p><b>Prof. Vimal Ranchhod</b>, University of Cape Town</p>



“The most famous economists abroad don’t get the opportunity to engage with policymakers as researchers do in South Africa; we have a great culture of partnerships in this country”, remarked ACEIR’s director, Prof. Murray Leibbrandt, during the closing session of the Inequality, Work, and Nature Conference. The timing of this event was perfect because it was a chance to share a body of research from ACEIR’s first five years with the aim to help inform policy solutions to long-term development trajectories that are both ecologically and socially sustainable, especially in the context of the Global South.

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## NEWS | Planning for a new Africa-Europe Cluster of Research Excellence



Top row, left to right: Prof. Murray Leibbrandt (UCT), Assoc. Prof. Antonia Grohmann (AU), Prof. Robert D. Osei (UoG); bottom row, left to right: Prof. Damiano K. Manda (UoN), Assist. Prof. Franco Ruzzenenti (UG), Prof. Vimal Ranchhod (UCT), Dr Anita Veltmaat (UG), Haajirah Esau (UCT), Prof. Robert Lensink (UoG), Prof. Leibbrandt (UCT) & Prof. Manda (UoN).

ACEIR’s executive team gathered in The Netherlands in the second week of December to plan for the operationalisation of the Cluster of Research Excellence in Inequality, Poverty, and Deprivation (CoRE IPD) with their European counter partners. The CoRE IPD brings together the universities of Ghana (UoG), Nairobi (UoN), Cape Town (UCT), Aarhus (AU), Göttingen (UGT), and Groningen (UG). It is one of the 17 research clusters launched by ARUA and The Guild of European Research-Intensive Universities to pioneer a new approach to equitable collaboration and capacity building. Work is already underway with the drafting of grant proposals and planning for joint degree programmes and a summer school in 2024. Watch this space!

[ABOUT THE CORE IPD](#)



## NEWS | Public lecture on Kenyan inequalities



*Dr. Martine O. Oleche, Chair of the Department of Economics and Development Studies, University of Nairobi, speaking at the report launch. Photo: UoN Faculty of Arts and Sciences via Twitter.*

ACEIR colleagues at the University of Kenya co-hosted a public lecture with Kenya's National Gender and Equality Commission and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) for the release of an “Inequality diagnostics for Kenya” report. The report focuses on socio-economic perspectives in Kenya and “aims to stimulate dialogue, partnerships and further research around inequality and, ultimately, to have a positive impact on inclusive development through informed interventions”. The report is based on recent literature on Kenyan inequalities, among them the “Inequality trends and diagnostics in Kenya 2020”, a report by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics in partnership with the Ghana research node of ACEIR based at the School of Economics, University of Nairobi, and with support from Agence Française de Développement and the European Union.

ABOUT THE INEQUALITY DIAGNOSTICS SERIES

## NEWS | Collaborating on a G2LM|LIC project in Ghana



Photo: IMF Photo/Andrew Caballero-Reynolds via [Flickr](#)

Funding was received from the Gender, Growth, and Labour Markets in Low-Income Countries (G2LM|LIC) Programme for research on the consequences of educational expansion in Ghana. The research is a collaboration between the Siyaphambili Post-school Research Initiative of UCT’s SALDRU and researchers from ACEIR’s South Africa and Ghana nodes. The team currently comprises Siyaphambili’s Associate Prof. Nicola Branson; Prof. Vimal Ranchhod and Dr Emma Whitelaw (SALDRU/ACEIR South Africa); and Prof. Robert D. Osei (ISSER, University of Ghana/ACEIR Ghana).

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CAPACITY BUILDING | Policy brief on the impact of fiscal policies on poverty and inequality





Photo: Oxfam in Ghana

In early November, colleagues from ACEIR Ghana released a policy brief on their assessment of fiscal interventions and welfare in Ghana, based on methodology developed by the Centre for Equality Research (CEQ). The policy brief was produced for an Oxfam in Ghana project and was launched at a policy dialogue on leveraging fiscal policy to reduce inequality based on the Sustainable Development Goal 10.4.2 indicator. The project is supported by the GIZ and was implemented with ACEIR researchers at the Institute of Statistical Social and Economic Research, University of Ghana. The dialogue brought together development partners; academics; and representatives from civil society organisations, the media, and others. It created an opportunity to deliberate the research findings and share valuable insights on how to take the policy recommendations forward in major future fiscal measures in Ghana.

POLICY BRIEF

CAPACITY BUILDING | Contributing to the ARUA biennial conference



Clockwise from left to right: Dr Emma Whitelaw (ACEIR SA), Assoc. Prof. Nicola Branson (UCT); Prof. Robert D. Osei (ACEIR Ghana)

Several ACEIR colleagues participated in the fourth biennial conference of the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) in Lagos, Nigeria, in mid-November.

ACEIR SA researcher, Dr Emma Whitelaw, presented a paper, “Exploring employment transitions by educational attainment and gender: Evidence from the Ghanaian Socio-economic Panel Survey” that was authored with her colleague from the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU), Associate Prof. Nicola Branson. Nicola and Emma also facilitated an early career workshop as part of a series by ARUA’s different centres of excellence. They explained and demonstrated to participants how to use panel data in the analysis of poverty, inequality, and related topics.

The convenor of ACEIR Ghana, Prof. Robert D. Osei, was part of a policy roundtable on global challenges and the implications for research at African universities. He highlighted the pitfalls of African countries receiving research funding largely from the Global North; the challenges posed to North–South learning and knowledge exchanges by stricter bureaucracy and visa regulations due to geopolitical tensions; and strengthening partnerships between universities around the globe to engage policymakers on research evidence relevant for governments.

ROUNDTABLE RECORDING

CALL FOR EXPERTS/PROJECT LEADERS | Wealth Data Science Summer/Winter School 2024





Photo: Freepik

Applications are still open to experts and projects leaders to be part of the Wealth Data Science Summer/Winter School (WeDSS) programme set for July 2024. The University of Bremen's International Graduate School of Social Sciences and ACEIR will be hosting next year's edition of the Schools in Computational Social Science and Data Science. The School will take place in person on two campuses: at Constructor University in Bremen, Germany, and at ACEIR's hub at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. Both locations will form a joint online campus for lectures, project work, and exchange. The 2024 focus is on the genesis of wealth, in particular the mechanisms for the production of different wealth classes; mechanisms for the reproduction of wealth; and mechanisms for the redistribution of wealth.

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## THE TEAM | Congratulations

**Prof. Vimal Ranchhod**, the convener of the South Africa node, recently was inducted as a member of the Academy of Science of South Africa. Induction to ASSAf is a tremendous honour bestowed upon the country's most excellent and internationally renowned researchers in recognition of their scholarly and scientific achievements in the service of society.

**Chandré Jacobs's** PhD proposal has been accepted and she is now a fully-fledged PhD candidate. Chandré, who is based at ACEIR South Africa, says the (provisional) title of her thesis is "Inequality, protest action, and xenophobic violence in South Africa". While much of the academic work on protest action and xenophobic violence in South Africa is qualitative, her research will offer a qualitative contribution to the literature and aims to

explore inequality in the local environment as one of the preconditions for these types of conflict to occur.

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## NEW ACEIR PUBLICATIONS | Policy brief

### Fiscal interventions and welfare in Ghana: A CEQ assessment using Ghana Living Standards Survey (round 7)

*Kwadwo Danso-Mensah, Richmond Atta-Ankomah, Robert Darko Osei & Isaac Osei-Akoto. A policy brief by ACEIR Ghana at the Institute of Statistical Social and Economic Research (ISSER), University of Ghana, Legon, October 2023.*

Governments are a major (or the most important) agent in ensuring that economic growth yields significant welfare gains through improved income distribution and poverty reduction. This is because governments exert enormous control in any economy, particularly through fiscal (tax and spending) policies. The nature of such policy measures can undermine inclusive growth and can directly or indirectly lead to major changes in both short- and long-term welfare outcomes. There is therefore a need to comprehensively investigate the extent to which various governments' spending and taxation instruments independently or together impact on poverty and inequality. This policy brief describes one such study that provides evidence on key factors that promote or limit the redistribution and poverty reduction effect of a government's fiscals. By applying the Commitment to Equity (CEQ) Institute's framework for incidence analyses of government fiscals, this research examines and quantifies the extent to which a range of taxes (both direct and indirect), government subsidies, and social spending affect poverty and inequality in Ghana. Ultimately, the evidence from the analysis can be utilised to ensure that this government's policy decisions and interventions are not only efficient and effective but also prioritise equity across that country's various population segments.

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## NEW ACEIR PUBLICATIONS | Working papers

### Demographic challenges for global labor markets in the 21st century, Africa in a changing world

*David Lam & Murray Leibbrandt. ACEIR working paper no. 11, November 2023, co-published with the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit, University of Cape Town (SALDRU working paper no. 303).*

The world is projected to add 2.5 billion people to the total population and 1.1 billion people to the working-age population between 2020 and 2100. Almost all the additional working-age people will be added in sub-Saharan Africa, a dramatic change from previous decades, when the growth of the working-age population was concentrated in Asia. This paper analyses the demography of the African labour force in the coming decades using the latest UN population projections. The authors show that by 2050, Africa will be the only region in the world with a growing working-age population; and it will be the only region in



which the ratio of dependents to working-age population is falling. On the demand side, Africa needs to produce two million jobs per month by 2040 to keep up with the growth of the working-age population. This rate of job creation is similar to Asia's during the period in which its working-age population was growing at similar rates. Still, this remains a daunting challenge for Africa in the coming decades.

### **The socio-economic dimensions of racial inequality in South Africa: A social space perspective**

*Nicola Branson, Johs Hjellbrekke, Murray Leibbrandt, Vimal Ranchhod, Mike Savage & Emma Whitelaw. ACEIR working paper no. 10, September 2023.*

This study uses a sociological lens to investigate the structuring of privilege in South Africa. The analysis is a first attempt to systematically map how stocks of economic, cultural, and social capital intersect to generate systematic and structural inequalities in the country, and to consider how far these are associated with fundamental racial divides. The authors draw on nationally representative data from the National Income Dynamics Study and employ geometric data analysis and multiple correspondence analysis to construct a model of South African "social space". Their findings reveal distinct features of this model: 1. the inheritor class shows the intensely strong interplay between inequalities of economic and cultural capital; 2. there is some evidence that this homogeneity is associated with an enduring racialised divide; 3. the size of the upwardly mobile class indicates that forms of middle-class privilege go well beyond a core of the 8% of the white population; and 4. social capital is strongly delineated by age, with older respondents displaying on average higher levels of trust. The cluster analysis reveals that trust levels increase with economic and cultural capital levels within younger age groups and could, therefore, entrench social and racial divisions.

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## **NEW PUBLICATIONS BY ACEIR RESEARCHERS |** **Journal articles**

**Whitelaw E.**, Branson N., & **Leibbrandt M.** (2023). A dynamic perspective on profiling financial-aid eligibility: The case of South Africa. *Journal of Social Policy*, 1-25.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279423000636>

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## **NEW PUBLICATIONS BY ACEIR RESEARCHERS |** **Conference papers**

**Andrés Díaz Pabón, F., Shifa, M., Ranchhod, V., Oduro, A., Manda, D.K., Danso-Mensah, K., Leibbrandt, M., & Mwabu, G.** (2023). Climate change-related shocks, resilience, and welfare outcomes: Evidence from Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa. Paper presented at the Inequality, Work, and Nature Conference, Cape Town, South Africa, 8 – 9 November 2023.

**Danso-Mensah, K., Atta-Ankomah, R., Osei, R.D., & Osei-Akoto, I.** (2023). Fiscal interventions and welfare in Ghana: A CEQ assessment using Ghana Living Standards Survey. Paper presented at the 11th Pan-African conference on illicit financial flows and taxation, Accra, Ghana, 22 – 24 November 2023.

**Jana, A.** (2023). Spatial inequalities in the city. Differential experiences and impacts of climate change. Paper presented at the Inequality, Work, and Nature Conference, Cape Town, South Africa, 8 – 9 November 2023.

**Manda, D., Kipruto, S., Oleche, M., Wambugu, A., Samoei, P., & Mwabu, G.** (2023). Profiling multidimensional vulnerability to climate change impacts in Kenya. Paper presented at the Inequality, Work, and Nature Conference, Cape Town, South Africa, 8 – 9 November 2023.

**Shifa, M., Leibbrandt, M., Gordon, D., Osei, R.D., Owoo, N.S., & Oduro, A.D.** (2023). Profiling multidimensional vulnerability to climate change impacts in South Africa and Ghana. Paper presented at the Inequality, Work, and Nature Conference, Cape Town, South Africa, 8 – 9 November 2023.

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## NEW PUBLICATIONS BY ACEIR RESEARCHERS | Blogs

**[South Africa’s higher education funding conundrum: Could the current funding system hamper social mobility and university performance?](#)**

In this *Global dev* article, Associate Prof. Nicole Branson and **Dr Emma Whitelaw** reflect on a new set of complex but critical considerations brought on by recent changes to South Africa’s higher education financial aid system. They describe potential issues that could change students’ incentives for going to university, as well as universities’ incentives to improve student performance and graduation rates. They highlight that “these changes have the potential to impede social mobility and inclusive development”.

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## OUR FOOTPRINT | Oxfam global dissemination webinar





On the first day of December, ACEIR Ghana's Dr. Richmond A. Ankomah participated in a webinar on "Advancing equity through fiscal policy analysis that focused on Commitment to Equity (CEQ) tools."

[WATCH RECORDING](#)

## OUR FOOTPRINT | Universidad de Pamplona public lecture



*Photo: Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Empresariales - Unipamplona via Facebook*

In the first week of December, Dr Fabio Andrés Díaz Pabón gave a public lecture at the Department of Economics of the Universidad de Pamplona, Colombia. He talked about the importance of Africa for the future of global development, and the relevance of researching

and understanding African development as a lens to understand global development.

## OUR FOOTPRINT | 11th Pan-African conference on illicit financial flows and taxation



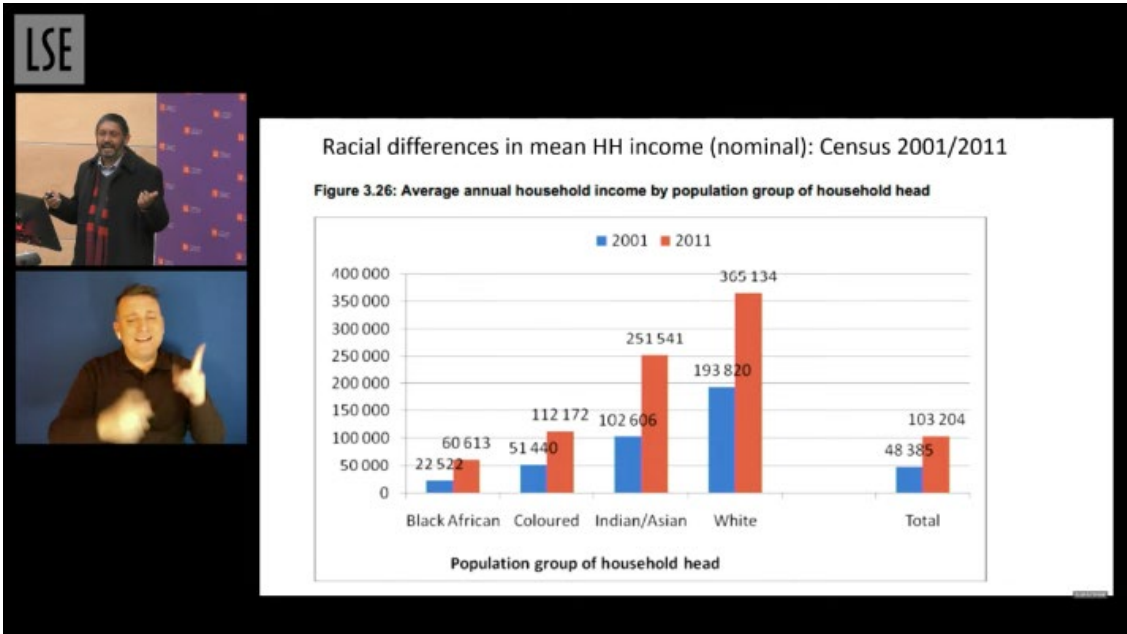
Photo: Ghanaian Times

Dr Kwadwo Danso-Mensah presented findings from CEQ assessment of fiscal interventions and welfare in Ghana at the 11th Pan-African Conference in the last week of November. The *Ghanaian Times* reports that he highlighted that political parties need to work together to ensure these social intervention policies were executed to the benefits of Ghanaians in the face of dire economic challenges.

[READ ARTICLE](#)

## OUR FOOTPRINT | LSE public event on the racial wealth divide





Prof. Vimal Ranchhod participated in a recent public discussion on the intensification of racial wealth divides as wealth assets allow social mobility advantages to the children of wealthy households. The event was hosted by the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) and featured research findings from the UK, Bangladesh, and South Africa.

[WATCH RECORDING](#)

OUR FOOTPRINT | Conference hosted by South Africa’s Presidential Climate Commission



Photo: USAID in Africa via Flickr

Dr Muna Shifa presented at the Presidential Climate Commission's South African Modelling Community of Practice Conference held in Cape Town in October. Her presentation highlighted the persistence and high levels of multiple dimensions of inequalities in South Africa, as well as the significance of having measures in place to address historic and ongoing inequities while embarking on a "just energy transition" path. She also took part in a conference panel discussion on the challenges of social and human development analysis.

READ MORE

## IN THE MEDIA

**Suspend new social intervention policies until old initiatives are completed – ACEIR and OXFAM**

*Ghanaian Times*, 29 November 2023

**The quest for a just transition: Strategic dilemmas and policy resolutions**

*SALDRU News*, 28 November 2023

**Climate change exacerbates inequalities, undermines poverty eradication**

*UCT News*, 14 November 2023

**Crooked coal, corruption and politics — experts flag the barriers to SA’s energy transition**

*Daily Maverick*, 12 November 2023



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