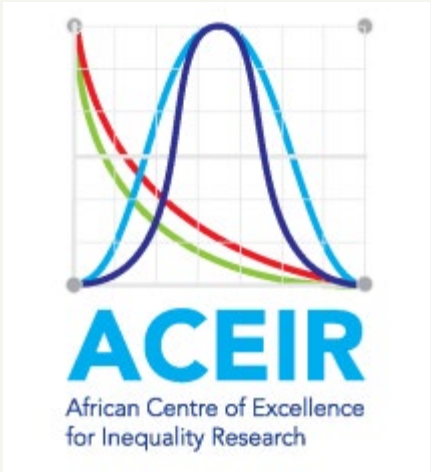


[View this email in your browser](#)



ACEIR is a research centre of the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA). 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.



WEBSITE



EMAIL



FACEBOOK



TWITTER

WELCOME TO THE ACEIR NEWS BULLETIN

MAY 2020

We trust this bulletin is reaching you and your teams in good health and resilient spirit as nations rally to halt the COVID-19 pandemic. As have many research units around the globe, the ACEIR hub and South African node, based at the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU), University of Cape Town, had to move all staff and work to online platforms when the country went into a lockdown to slow the coronavirus infection rate. ACEIR colleagues and partners in Ghana and Kenya have also been working under more or less similar conditions.

Late in April, the ACEIR teams from all three nodes would have participated in the **International Summit on the SDGs in Africa 2020** in Cape Town – now postponed until 2021. The several ACEIR workshops and other fora for engagement that were planned for immediately before and after the summit have also been put on hold. Revised dates will be announced in due course.

In this bulletin we report the start of a critical component of ACEIR’s work: data scholarship capacity building in partnership with DataFirst, Africa’s only data platform that is internationally certified as a trusted repository.

Also read about:

- An ACEIR South Africa stakeholder engagement earlier this year to discuss the roles of academics, the business and non-profit sectors in strategies and innovations to reduce inequality in the country.
- Recent and forthcoming presentations and publications, including inequality trends reports for Ghana and Kenya respectively, similar to the one released for South Africa towards the end of 2019.
- SALDRU colleagues’s evidence-based policy recommendation in response to a request from policy advisors commissioned by the Presidency to investigate how different social assistance expansion measures would reach poor and vulnerable household members during the lockdown and its aftermath.

It is clear this year is not “business as usual”, but the ACEIR executive committee has been quick in responding to the current circumstances. While members of the nodes cannot physically spend time together in the near future, a virtual research day planned for this week will be a much-appreciated opportunity to share and discuss the work that is underway in Ghana, Kenya and South Africa.

We will share news on this and other developments in the coming months. Until then, we extend our best wishes to all in these trying times.



Image: Negative Space/Stocksnap

An important component of ACEIR’s work has commenced in 2020: data scholarship development through capacity building. In particular, supporting the Ghanaian and Kenyan nodes to create and maintain their own data hubs alongside data-skills training for ACEIR researchers and partners from national statistics offices. Leading this work is a small team from DataFirst, an internationally recognised research data service based at the University of Cape Town. DataFirst has been disseminating data to researchers for 19 years and their data platform is the only one on the continent that is internationally certified as a trusted repository.

[READ MORE](#)

NEWS | Introduction to a data tool well suited to spatial inequality research

ACEIR contributors from the three nodes and their counterparts from Statistics South Africa gathered earlier this year for the first training opportunity to bolster the centre’s data analysis capacity. The training was conducted by DataFirst and focused on the use of “R” – an open source data analysis tool similar to Stata. The aim was not only to introduce researchers to the use of the software, but also included an interactive component for using R for spatial inequality data analysis as an area of particular interest on ACEIR’s research agenda.

[READ MORE](#)

RECENT EVENTS | Acting on inequality in South Africa



Image: Charmaine Smith/ACEIR

To further the important insights from South Africa’s first comprehensive [report](#) on inequality trends in the country, ACEIR South Africa partners have hosted a stakeholder engagement in February to learn more about the findings. Importantly, the event was an opportunity for government, academia, civil society, labour unions and international organisations to hold constructive conversations on strategies to tackle the country’s monumental inequality challenges. Collaboration, government’s capacity to deliver services, and a focus on the gendered nature of inequality were some of the broad themes that emerged in the conversations.

[READ MORE](#)

NEWS | Proposal for COVID-19 relief measures for informal workers in South Africa



Image: John Hogg/World Bank/Flickr

In response to a potential catastrophic economic and humanitarian crisis due to the lockdown and its aftermath, ACEIR South Africa colleagues who are part of the team at SALDRU, proposed to the government to use its vast social grant infrastructure to immediately reach most of the poorest households. In particular, by implementing a temporary “top-up” to the value of the Child Support Grant, as well as a special COVID-19 grant to all unemployed adults who do not receive existing social grants and are not registered with the Unemployment Insurance Fund. This would help to reach an estimated close to eight million informal sector workers, and the 13 million additional household members whom they support. While the government has adopted the team’s proposal only partly, the research was a valuable contribution to evidence-informed policy making. Without assistance to these households, the decline in earnings in the informal sector would have a devastating impact on poverty and food insecurity in South Africa, write Ihsaan Bassier, Josh Budlender, Prof Murray Leibbrandt, Prof Vimal Ranchhod and Rocco Zizzamia in *The Conversation*.

[READ MORE](#)



Image: Nordforsk/Flickr

PRESENTATIONS | ACEIR Ghana, Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research, University of Ghana, Legon

- Prof Robert Darko Osei presented at a workshop on ‘Strengthening the Use of Poverty Analysis to Achieve SDGs 1 and 2’ hosted by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) in November 2019 in Akosombo, Ghana. His presentation was on ‘Measures of poverty of inequality’.
- Dr Richmond Atta Ankomah presented on ‘Characteristics of the poor and drivers of poverty in Ghana’ at the same IFPRI workshop.
- Dr Nkechi Owoo’s research paper on micro-level determinants of consumption inequality was presented at two conferences in 2019. First, at the Nordic Conference on Development Economics at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark; and then at the **Poverty and Inequality Conference** of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP) hosted at the University of Michigan, United States. Dr Owoo remains involved in the work of the IUSSP as a member of its Scientific Panel on Population, Poverty and Inequality.

PRESENTATIONS | ACEIR Kenya, based at the School of Economics, University of Nairobi

- Prof Germano Mwabu presented a joint paper with Prof David Sahn of Cornell University, United States, on ‘Agricultural growth patterns, transformation, health and nutrition outcomes in Africa’ at a **Senior Policy Seminar** of the African Economic Research Consortium in Abuja, Nigeria. Held in March this year, the event gathered senior African policymakers who, as a result, adopted a **declaration**

of their strong commitment to supporting agricultural and food systems for enhanced human capital development.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS| Social protection



Image: Châu Thông Phan/StockSnap

Osei, R., Pirttilä, J. O., & Rattenhuber, P. (2019). Quantifying the impacts of expanding social protection on efficiency and equity. *The International Journal of Microsimulation*, 12(1): 105-123.

A key challenge facing developing countries when they are gradually building up their social protection system is the presence of a large informal sector. Social safety nets should be expanded to reduce poverty, but financing social protection through higher taxes may reduce the number of formal sector jobs available. The aim of this paper is to quantify the impacts of a revenue-neutral expansion of social protection in a developing country on both income distribution and efficiency which we measure via the impacts on formal sector work. Results from a new tax benefit microsimulation model for Ghana, GHAMOD, are combined with the extensive margin elasticity of the share of formal work with respect to the tax wedge on formal labour, derived from repeated cross-section econometric estimates. The size of the estimated formality elasticity is modest and therefore the distributional gains of expanding cash transfer programmes are considerable, even when taking into account behavioural impacts.

[READ MORE](#)

FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS| Ghana and Kenya

inequality trends reports

The ACEIR nodes in Ghana and Kenya are both in the process of finalising those countries' inequality trends and diagnostics reports. The ACEIR Ghana team was preparing to present their report at the International SDG Summit in April but the release has been postponed in light of the coronavirus pandemic. The ACEIR Kenya team has presented the second version of their report to the ACEIR steering committee in March and are now preparing for publication. The ongoing effects of COVID-19, however, have pushed timeframes back and new release dates will be announced in due course.

FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS| Working and research papers

- Researchers from the three ACEIR nodes will be publishing a series of working papers, some of which focus on:
 - Exploring the dynamics of micro-level consumption inequality: the case of Ghana.
 - Understanding the relationship between economic inequality and inequality of opportunity and education outcomes in Ghana.
 - Analysing fiscal incidence for Kenya based on the Commitment to Equity (CEQ) framework
 - Earnings inequality over the life-course in South Africa.
 - Night-time lights inequality across South African municipalities.
 - Repurposing social assistance in South Africa as emergency relief.
 - Grounding Atkinson's "thinking outside of the box" framework for studying inequality in Africa.
- A research paper on 'Inequality of Opportunity', by ACEIR Ghana researcher Dr. Monica Lambon-Quayefio, was due to be presented at the **2nd IUSSP Poverty and Inequality Conference** in June. The event has been postponed to 2021.

IN THE NEWS | South African inequalities



Image: StockSnap

UCT’s contribution to expansion of South Africa’s social assistance programme during COVID-19

Press statement, 7 May 2020

Inequality in SA: government needs help

UCT News, 3 March 2020

South Africa: Long walk to women’s freedom

Gender Links, 12 February 2020

HELP US SPREAD THE WORD



We are encouraging our readers across the continent and beyond to share ACEIR news with colleagues and associates. If they want to stay connected, they can sign up for future news from the Centre.

SIGN UP

