

Isaac M. Mbiti

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Webpage: sites.google.com/site/isaacmbiti

Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy
University of Virginia
P.O. Box 400893
Garrett Hall, 235 McCormick Rd
Charlottesville, VA 22904-4893

Email: imbti@virginia.edu
Phone: 434- 924-0812
Fax: 434-243-2318

Academic Employment

Associate Professor of Public Policy and Economics, Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy, University of Virginia, 2020- Present

Assistant Professor of Public Policy and Economics, Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy, University of Virginia, 2014- 2020

Martin Luther King Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, September 2010 – December 2011

Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Southern Methodist University, 2007- 2014

Professional Affiliations

[Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab \(J-PAL\)](#), [NBER](#), [BREAD](#), and [IZA](#)

Education

Ph.D. in Economics, Brown University, 2007

A.M. in Economics, Brown University, 2002

B.Sc. in Economics (*Summa Cum Laude*), University of Wisconsin-River Falls, 1999

Publications

“[Designing Teacher Performance Pay Programs: Experimental Evidence from Tanzania](#)” with Mauricio Romero, and Youdi Schipper (Accepted at Economic Journal)

“Can Patients’ Reports Improve Health Providers’ Performance? Evidence from a Lab-in-the Field Experiment in Kenya” with Danila Serra. *Experimental Economics*, (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10683-021-09721-y>

“Teacher Opinions on Performance Pay: Evidence from Tanzania” with Youdi Schipper. *Journal of African Economies*, Volume 30, Issue 1, January 2021, Pages 55–80

“Can School Rankings Improve Performance? Evidence from a Nationwide Reform in Tanzania” with Jacobus Cilliers and Andrew Zeitlin. *Journal of Human Resources*, Summer 2021 vol. 56 no. 3 655-685.

“Inputs, Incentives, and Complementarities in Primary Education: Experimental Evidence from Tanzania” with Karthik Muralidharan, Mauricio Romero, Youdi Schipper, Rakesh Ranjani, and

Constantine Manda. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Volume 134, Issue 3, August 2019, Pages 1627–1673. Working paper available at <https://www.nber.org/papers/w24876>

Publications (continued)

“The Need for Accountability in Education in Developing Countries” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Summer 2016, Vol. 30, No 3

“Mobile Money: The Impact of M-Pesa in Kenya” with David Weil, in *NBER Volume on African Economic Successes*, edited by Sebastian Edwards, Simon Johnson and David Weil, University of Chicago Press (2016)

“Effects of School Quality on Student Achievement: Discontinuity Evidence from Kenya” with Adrienne M. Lucas. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* July 2014 6(3): 234-263

“Youth Unemployment in Ghana” with Kim Lehrer, in *Youth and Employment in Sub-Saharan Africa: Working but Poor* edited by Hiroyuki Hino and Gustav Rainis. Routledge Press (2014)

“The Home Economics of E-Money: Velocity, Cash Management, and Discount Rates of M-Pesa Users” With David Weil, *American Economic Review, Papers and Proceedings*, May 2013 103 (3), 369-374

“Does Free Primary Education Narrow Gender Differences in Schooling Outcomes? Evidence from Kenya” with Adrienne M. Lucas. *Journal of African Economies* October, 2012: 1-32.

“Access, Sorting, and Achievement: the Short-Run Effects of Free Primary Education in Kenya” with Adrienne M. Lucas. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 4(4): 226-253.

“The Determinants and Consequences of School Choice Errors in Kenya” with Adrienne M. Lucas. *American Economic Review, Papers and Proceedings*, May 2012, 102(3): 283-288.

“Mobile Phones and Economic Development in Africa” with Jenny C. Aker, *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Summer 2010, Vol. 24, No. 3

“Is the Mobile Phone Africa’s ‘Green Revolution’” with Jenny C. Aker, *Boston Review*, March 2010

Working Papers

“Can Financial Incentives to Firms Improve Apprentice Training? Experimental Evidence from Ghana” with Gabriel Brown, Morgan Hardy, Jamie McCasland and Isabelle Salcher

“[The Apprenticeship to Work Transition: Experimental Evidence from Ghana](#)” with Morgan Hardy, Jamie McCasland and Isabelle Salcher

“[Can Education be Standardized? Evidence from Kenya](#)” with Guthrie Gray-Lobe, Anthony Keats, Michael Kremer, Owen Ozier

“Vocational Education in Kenya: Evidence from a Randomized Evaluation Among Youth” with Joan Hicks, Michael Kremer, and Edward Miguel

“Trust and Remittances: Lab-Experimental Evidence among Kenyan Migrants in the U.S” With Dan Silverman, Ploy Sitapong and Dean Yang

“[Back to the Basics: Curriculum Reform and Student Learning in Tanzania](#)” With Daniel Rodriguez Segura. RISE Working Paper

“Improving STEM Learning in Schools: Experimental Evidence from India” With Alejandro Ganimian.

Reports (with links)

“The Monetary Economics of E-Money in East Africa” With David Weil. AERC working Paper 2022.

“[Access and Quality: A Review of the Kenyan Education Sector](#)” with Rachel Glennester, Michael Kremer and Kudzai Takavarasha. Office of the Prime Minister of Kenya/ Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), 2011

“[Vocational Education Voucher Delivery and Labor Market Returns: A Randomized Evaluation among Kenyan Youth](#)” with Joan Hicks, Michael Kremer and Edward Miguel. Report for Spanish Impact Evaluation Fund (SIEF), World Bank, Washington, DC, 2011

“Youth and Livelihoods: A Review of Technical and Vocational Education and Training Programs for Youth” with Jamie McCasland and Holly Reed. International Rescue Committee, New York, 2011

“[The Implications of Innovations in the Financial Sector on the Conduct of Monetary Policy in East Africa](#)” with David Weil and Francis Mweya. International Growth Center Working Paper, 2012

Grants, Awards and Fellowships

Gates foundation “RCT of Bridge International Schools” \$958,786 with Anthony Keats, Michael Kremer and Owen Ozier

International Impact Evaluation Initiative (3ie): “Training for success: targeting and incentives in apprenticeship training in Ghana” \$482,000 (Co-PI with Jamie McCasland)

International Impact Evaluation Initiative (3ie): “Vocational Education in Kenya,” \$194,810 (Co-PI with Jonas Hjort, Michael Kremer, and Edward Miguel)

International Growth Center: “Vocational Education in Kenya” \$107,000 (Co-PI with Jonas Hjort, Michael Kremer, and Edward Miguel)

International Growth Center: “Increasing the Development Impact of Migrant Remittances: A Field Experiment Among Kenyan Migrants in the USA,” \$47,700 (Co-PI with Dean Yang)

IZA Growth and Labor Markets In Low Income Countries Programme “Start-up capital for youth: Assessing the potential of small business grants and vocational training in Kenya” \$521,291 (PI with Joan Hicks, Edward Miguel and Michael Kremer)

J-PAL Jobs Initiative “The Longer-run Effects of Apprenticeships in Ghana” With Morgan Hardy and Jamie McCasland. Total award \$150,000

J-PAL Post-Primary Initiative “School Leaders as Agents of Change: Evidence from India” \$49,921 (with Alejandro Ganimian and Adrienne Lucas)

J-PAL Post-Primary Initiative “Targeting and Incentives in Ghana’s National Apprenticeship Program” \$49,721 (with Morgan Hardy and Jamie McCasland)

J-PAL Post-Primary Initiative “Targeting and Incentives in Ghana’s National Apprenticeship Program” \$49,721 (with Morgan Hardy and Jamie McCasland)

J-PAL Post-Primary Initiative “Evaluating After School English Programs for Youth: A Pilot of Freedom English Academy” \$38,586 (with Sisir Debnath and Tarun Jain)

J-PAL Post-Primary Initiative “An Impact Evaluation of Bridge International Academies” \$294,708 (with Anthony Keats, Michael Kremer and Owen Ozier)

J-PAL Youth Initiative “*Evaluation of the Indian National Employability Through Apprenticeship Program*” \$299,138, (Co-PI with Abhijit Banerjee, Marianne Bertrand and Bruno Crepon)

J-PAL Youth Initiative “The Returns to Apprenticeship Training in Ghana” \$50,000

J-PAL Youth Initiative “*Encouraging Youth Entrepreneurship in Kenya: A Study of Vocational Training and Cash Grants.*” \$81,937 (with Joan Hicks, Edward Miguel and Michael Kremer).

International Labor Organization “Start-Up Capital Grants for Youth Entrepreneurship” \$99,792 (with Joan Hicks, Edward Miguel and Michael Kremer).

National Academy of Education/Spencer Foundation Fellowship, 2010-2011 \$55,000

NBER Africa Initiative: “Mobile-Banking: The Impact of M-Pesa in Kenya,” \$66,000, (Co-PI with David N. Weil)

National Science Foundation “Collaborative Research: Experimental Evidence on the Returns to Vocational Education in Kenya” \$150,023

National Institutes of Health “Estimating the Impacts of Health and Human Capital Investment on Long-Run Life Outcomes in Kenya: Evidence from Three Randomized Evaluations” (PI, Edward Miguel), Subcontract \$211,357)

Omidyar Network “Learning in Low Cost Private Schools” \$600,000, (Co-PI with Anthony Keats, Michael Kremer and Owen Ozier)

Research in Improving Systems in Education. “Big Results Now! Research on Education Systems Reform in Tanzania” 4,200,000 GBP (co-investigator, James Habyarimana- PI)

Twaweza Initiative “Improving Early Grade Learning in Tanzania” (with Karthik Muralidharan)
Total budget \$1,256,628

USAID Development Innovations Ventures: “Ghana National Apprenticeship Program Impact Evaluation: Effort, Incentives and Returns” \$474,000 (with Jamie McCasland)

World Bank Governance Trust Grant “Crowd-Sourcing Citizen Voices to Improve Public Service Delivery: A Pilot Study of the Huduma Platform in Kenya” \$49,000

World Bank Strategic Impact Evaluation Fund (SIEF): Evaluation of Bridge International Academies with Anthony Keats, Michael Kremer and Owen Ozier

World Bank Results Based Financing in Education Trust Fund “Improving Early Grade Learning through “Cash-On-Delivery” in Tanzania” \$198,500 PI

World Bank Jobs Multidonor Trust Fund. “Ghana National Apprenticeship Programme Evaluation.” \$157,000 PI

Presentations

2022: Stanford, UC-Davis, Williams College, Vanderbilt

2021: Pittsburg, Columbia, Wisconsin, Zurich, George Mason, Maryland, Michigan, University of Nairobi.

2020 (including those cancelled due to Covid-19): UT- Austin, Amherst College, UC Davis, Center for Global Development, Oxford University, West Point, Bristol University, Tokyo University

2019: Duke, George Washington University, Society of Labor Economics, Stanford CEPA, World Bank

2018: Brown University, Boston University, IZA/ University of Michigan, University of Virginia, Washington Area Development Conference, NEUDC

2017: University of Illinois, Curry school of Education at University of Virginia, Bocconi University, Brown University, Tufts University, Dartmouth University, University of Vermont, IZA/World Bank Labor Markets, USAID, Georgetown University

2016: Stanford University Economics Dept Stanford University Freeman Spogli Institute, University of Western Australia, Monash University, University of Melbourne, University of Sydney, IFPRI, NEUDC

2015: Indian School of Business (Hyderabad), Brown University (Micro Lunch), Washington Area Development Conference (Georgetown), USAID DIV, Secondary Education and

Transferable Skills Roundtable (Washington DC), Center for Global Development RISE Conference, NEUDC, World Bank IZA conference

2014: American Economic Association Annual Meeting, CSAE Conference Oxford University, Society of Labor Economics Annual Meeting, University of Edinburgh, University of Oregon, Université de Sherbrooke, University of Texas at Dallas, COSTECH Workshop (Tanzania)

2013: American Economic Association Annual Meeting, Baylor Global Business Forum, World Bank, IZA/ World Bank Employment and Development Conference, Georgia Tech, Clemson, Notre Dame, Vanderbilt, Texas Empirical Conference, Johns Hopkins University, UVA, IZA Growth and Labor Markets in Developing Countries Conference.

2012: Society of Labor Economics, NOVA School of Business

2011: Boston University, Dartmouth College, Fordham University, International Growth Centre, International Rescue Committee, MIT/Harvard Joint Seminar, NBER Africa Project Conference, Paris School of Economics, Texas Empirical Conference, Toulouse University, Tufts University, University of Michigan, University of Minnesota, World Bank

2010: University of Oxford, University of Connecticut, Econometric Society World Congress, Edinburgh University, Graduate Institute Economic Seminar, NBER Africa Project Conference, NYU, Society of Labor Economics World Congress, Tulane University

2009: Brookings Institute, UC-Berkeley, World Bank, Baylor University, NBER Africa Project Conference

2008: University of Washington, University of Michigan, NBER Africa Project Meeting, Northeast Universities Development Consortium Conference (NEUDC), Population Association of America (PAA) Annual Meeting, Society of Labor Economics (SOLE), Annual Meeting

2007: Southern Methodist University, University of Minnesota, Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs, Latin American Econometric Society (LAMES) Annual Meeting, Northeast Universities Development Consortium Conference (NEUDC), Population Association of America (PAA) Annual Meeting

Teaching Experience

University of Virginia:

Research Methods and Data Analysis in Public Policy (Undergraduate), Global Challenges in Labor and Social Policy (Masters), Economics of Public Policy I (Masters)

Southern Methodist University:

Labor Economics (Undergraduate), Economic Development: Microeconomic Perspectives (Undergraduate), Economic Development (PhD)

PhD Student Advising and first placement

Ian McDonough (UNLV), Manan Roy (Impaq international), Jamie McCasland (University of British Columbia), Morgan Hardy (NYU- Abu Dhabi), Jingjing Ye (Southwestern University), Sanjeev Kumar (Visiting Assistant, University of Memphis), Sarah Andrews (Principia College)

Professional Service

Co-editor of Journal of Human Resources 2020-

Scientific Director, J-PAL- Africa. 2020-

Spencer Foundation/National Academy of Education Dissertation Fellowship Committee

Klaus Jacobs Prize Jury Member

Referee for *American Economic Review*, *American Economic Journal: Applied*, *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, *Economics of Education Review*, *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, *Economic Journal*, *Education Economics*, *Empirical Economics*, *Journal of European Economic Association*, *Journal of Development Economics*, *Journal of Economic Growth*, *Journal of Human Resources*, *Journal of Political Economy*, *Journal of Public Economics*, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, *Review of Economics and Statistics*, *Review of Economic Studies*, *Southern Economic Journal*, *World Bank Economic Review* and *World Development*

Grant proposal review for Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie), IZA Growth and Labor Markets Review, Swiss National Science Foundation, the National Science Foundation (ad-hoc reviews and Economics Fall Panel member), the Spencer Foundation (ad-hoc review and dissertation selection committee member), Private Enterprise Development in Low-Income Countries (PEDL) programme.

Conference Organizing: IZA Growth and Labor Markets Conference and Training program, December 2013, Nairobi, Kenya. Bread Africa Conference 2021

Impact Evaluation Trainings: J-PAL Executive Education, IZA Growth and Labor Markets Evaluation Short Course, International Rescue Committee Youth and Livelihoods, World Bank SIEF Course

Mentor for Spencer Foundation/National Academy of Education pre- and post-doctoral fellows

University Service

SMU Economics Department Information Technology Representative

SMU Endowed Chair Recruiting Committee 2009-2010, 2011-2012, 2012-2013

UVA Batten Search committee, 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2021-2022

UVA Batten/Curry Grant administrator search committee 2016

UVA Batten Faculty Research Series committee 2016,

UVA Batten Promotion and Tenure committee member (2020, 2021),

UVA Batten communications working group member (2019, 2020, 2021).

UVA Bankard Award Committee

UVA CGII Award Committee