Research Statement

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My research investigates why economic institutions in resource-rich, agrarian, and climate-vulnerable economies often struggle to convert natural and human resources into broad-based welfare gains. It also looks into how this shortfall affects households, regions, and genders. The study covers four interconnected areas: the political economy of natural resource wealth and the social contract, the economic impacts of temperature and rainfall changes, agricultural productivity and food security for small-scale farmers, and gender-specific aspects of structural change. Throughout, I apply econometric methods emphasizing measurement accuracy, especially since much of what we know about economic activity and wellbeing in low- and middle-income countries relies on administrative and remote sensing data, which are rarely validated directly.

Political Economy of Natural Resource Wealth

A recurring theme in my research is that resource wealth doesn't directly harm development; instead, it weakens the fiscal connection between citizens and the state. When government income relies on oil or minerals rather than taxes, the accountability that usually controls public spending becomes less effective, and this slackness impacts different groups unevenly. In "Is there a Subnational Resource Curse? Evidence from Households in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria" (*Resources Policy*), I explore whether living near extraction sites affects household welfare outcomes independently of national effects, moving the resource curse discussion from the cross-country level to the household level. A related paper, "How Do Households Cope during Aggregate Shocks? Evidence from the 2009–2015 Oil Crisis in Nigeria" (*Resources Policy*), investigates household coping strategies during the 2009–2015 oil price collapse and what this reveals about the vulnerability of welfare improvements based on resource revenues.

With Ada Wossink, my doctoral supervisor at Manchester, I explored how these dynamics interact with existing social structures in "Patriarchy, Pandemics, and the Gendered Resource Curse Thesis: Evidence from Petroleum Geology" (*Economics & Politics*). This work examines the relationship between petroleum geology, patriarchal norms, and the public health response to epidemics. Alongside Oyekola and Emediegwu, I studied whether the political incentives created by resource windfalls differ between autocratic and democratic regimes in "Commodity Windfalls, Political Regimes, and Environmental Quality" (*Energy Economics*), and what this means for environmental outcomes. Another project investigates how resource geography influences conflict risk: "Fertile Ground for Conflict: Evidence Revisited Using Spatial First Differences" (*Defence and Peace Economics*), with Lotanna Emediegwu and Ugochukwu Iloanugo, which re-evaluates a well-known link between agricultural resource abundance and civil conflict, using a spatial identification strategy to distinguish local variations from broader national trends.

Most African states were formed along colonial boundaries rather than through any pre-existing social contract. Consequently, I have been exploring how the fiscal institutions established by colonial powers continue to influence the relationship between the state and its citizens. My WGAPE-funded project, "Tax Reform and Political Economy Outcomes: Evidence from Colonial British Tax Systems in Nigeria," investigates whether the tax collection methods introduced during indirect rule have created persistent differences in citizens' willingness to hold their governments accountable. Alongside this, I am working on another project that uses night-time lights data to examine "The Political Resource Curse and Economic Growth" (presented at the Royal Economic Society Annual Conference). This research stems from my broader interest in measurement—while night-time lights are widely employed as a proxy for local economic activity in regions with limited official statistics, I am actively studying the conditions that ensure this proxy's reliability and how frequently it should be measured. This includes ongoing work assessing whether luminosity-based GDP

estimates for African economies are dependable.

Weather, Climate, and Economic Welfare

A second aspect of my research explores how shocks to temperature and precipitation influence labor productivity, health, and household well-being, focusing on why responses differ significantly between poor and affluent economies. Collaborating with Lotanna Emediegwu, Okoror, and Osadolor, our paper, "Harmful Temperatures and Consumption Expenditure: Evidence from Nigerian Households" (*Ecological Economics*), links extreme temperature events directly to household spending habits. This work extends climate-economics research beyond mere aggregate output, emphasizing welfare impacts and how families adapt in real time. In another study with Lotanna Emediegwu and Vincent Vienne, "Seasonal Temperatures and Economic Growth in the United Kingdom" (*Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics*), we examine a context where climate damages are typically considered minor. We investigate whether seasonal temperature fluctuations still significantly influence economic growth after accounting for adaptation and infrastructure.

This UK paper raises a question I am exploring further: while rich nations have the resources to adapt to climate variability, adaptation is ultimately a political decision, not merely a technical one. Voters' ideological beliefs influence the level of support for policies assisting firms affected by climate-related supply issues or workers suffering from heat-induced productivity declines. I am expanding this research to investigate how partisan loyalty and electoral motives influence policy responses to climate-related economic shocks in advanced economies. This area remains less developed than the physical and economic aspects of climate adaptation.

Agricultural Economics and Food Security

My background in agricultural economics guides a third research focus on small-scale farmers and food systems. Collaborating with Awogbemi, Karim, and Emediegwu, I contributed to the paper "Improving Willingness-to-Pay Studies for Traditional Food Products in Developing Countries: Evidence Using Repeated Experiments" (*African Journal of Agricultural and Resource Economics*). This work addresses a common methodological issue in valuation studies: single-instance willingness-to-pay surveys tend to be noisy, while repeated experiments help improve the accuracy of demand estimates for products vital to nutrition and rural livelihoods. In addition to this methodological work, I explore how rapid urbanization alters the sectoral makeup of rural labor and how these changes affect agricultural productivity and food security—topics closely related to the structural transformation research mentioned below.

Gender and Structural Transformation

My fourth area of focus explores how structural transformation—the shift of labor from agriculture to industry and services—impacts men and women differently. The study, titled "Structural Transformation and Gender-Specific Labour Market Frictions: Evidence from Nigeria," with Lotanna Emediegwu and supported by a CEPR STEG Small Research Grant, investigates the reasons behind the varying rates at which urban labor markets in Nigeria incorporate male and female workers during sectoral shifts. It considers frictions such as occupational segregation, limited access to capital, and mobility constraints to explain this disparity. I see this as addressing a gap in the literature, which has often treated the reallocation process as gender-neutral, even though different frictions affect men and women in distinct ways.

Approach and Ongoing Work

In my projects, I primarily use quasi-experimental and spatial identification methods, along with panel data techniques, and, when survey data is available, I incorporate repeated experimental designs. I also focus on the data infrastructure supporting this research: two ongoing projects develop and validate a Nighttime Lights Reliability Index for African nations and investigate the optimal frequency for sampling luminosity data to

accurately reflect economic activity without bias. This work is particularly relevant for researchers using remote sensing proxies in data-scarce environments. Additionally, I am engaged in a theoretical project that models insurgent violence as a dynamic optimization problem, where the insurgency's reliance on civilian cooperation evolves with the conflict. This approach links the political economy and conflict strands of my research through formal modeling, rather than relying solely on reduced-form estimation.

My research has received funding through a STEG Small Research Grant from the Centre for Economic Policy Research and a WGAPE Small Research Grant from the Centre for Effective Global Action at UC Berkeley. It has been presented at numerous forums, including the Royal Economic Society, the Econometric Society Africa Meeting, the Centre for the Study of African Economies Conference, the European Association of Environmental and Resource Economists Annual Conference, and the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association Annual Meeting. Additionally, I serve as an academic editor for *PLOS One* and assess for the University of Manchester's Leadership in Education Awards Programme. These roles keep me engaged with research beyond my immediate specialization and involve training the next generation of economists.

Moving forward, I plan to develop the political economy of climate adaptation into a dedicated research stream, complete the Nighttime Lights Reliability Index as a public tool for African economic research, and expand the gender and structural transformation agenda to better understand how labor market frictions vary by gender during economic industrialization. These efforts build on a common theme: exploring why institutions and assets that should foster shared prosperity often fall short, and identifying the costs borne when they do.