

BILAL MURTAZA SIDDIQI

DEVELOPMENT ECONOMIST | RESEARCH LEADERSHIP & EVIDENCE-TO-POLICY

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SUMMARY

Development economist with 20 years of experience designing, testing, and scaling evidence-based interventions across Africa, South Asia, Eastern Europe, and Southeast Asia. Research published in *Science*, the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, and the *American Economic Review*, with over 1,000 citations and coverage in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *NPR* and major international outlets. Raised \$10M in competitive research grants from FCDO, USAID, Gates, and others; advised high-net-worth donors on \$20M in philanthropic allocations. Advisor to governments, multilaterals, and bilateral donors on evidence-led reform. Built and led multi-country research programs at the World Bank, UC Berkeley, and IDinsight; represented organizations at the OECD, European Parliament, UN SDG secretariat, and UNHCR.

EDUCATION

University of Oxford | M.Phil & D.Phil in Economics | 2004 & 2012

- Rhodes Scholar, Class of 2002, Pakistan & St Antony's College
- Marie Curie-AMID Fellow, Institute for International Economic Studies, Stockholm

Lahore University of Management Sciences | B.Sc. (Hons.) Economics & Social Sciences | 2001

- NMF Gold Medal Recipient

EXPERIENCE

U.N. Environment Programme (UNEP), Policy & Programme Division | Impact Measurement Lead | 2026

- Leading the development of UNEP's organization-wide impact measurement methodology and system architecture for the 2026–2029 Medium-Term Strategy.
- Providing technical guidance on portfolio-level impact measurement using advanced quantitative approaches, including experimental and quasi-experimental designs, predictive analytics, and cost-effectiveness analysis.
- Designing training and coaching materials to build UNEP staff capacity on impact measurement, causal inference, and data analysis.

IDinsight | Senior Economist & Director, East and Southern Africa | 2023–2025

- Co-led strategy and operations for IDinsight in East and Southern Africa, identifying new engagements and building partnerships with governments, donors, and program implementers; represented IDinsight at high-level policy forums and with senior government and donor counterparts.
- Led a \$520K evaluation of GiveDirectly's universal basic income rollout in Malawi, reaching 185,000+ people, using novel high-frequency data to assess impacts on inflation, consumption, and market creation; findings informed subsequent scale-up and donor decisions on size and speed of cash transfer delivery.

- Oversaw a \$3M Gates Foundation-funded public financial reform initiative in Kenya aimed at strengthening the Treasury's fiscal governance and aligning financial flows with core social outcomes.
- Advised the Office of the President's Special Envoy for Climate Change on building a measurement framework to capture Kenya's national and international climate change activities.

The Life You Can Save | Director of Research & Growth | 2021–2022

- Built in-house research and evaluation capacity to identify the most effective organizations offering high-impact, evidence-based interventions that The Life You Can Save could endorse and support.
- Developed a novel charity evaluation framework enabling philanthropies and high-net-worth individuals to compare charities across welfare outcomes, geographies, and mechanism of impact.
- Drove partnership building with other effective altruism organizations and high impact non-profits; helped set organizational growth and strategy.

UC Berkeley, Center for Effective Global Action (CEGA) | Director of Research | 2019–2021

- Oversaw 30+ staff supporting research across CEGA's network of 200+ academics; managed a \$15M regranteeing portfolio; raised funds for multiple research programs; represented CEGA at policy and research convenings; mentored visiting academic economists from East and West Africa.
- Co-led CEGA's flagship data science programs, "Data Science for Development" and 'Targeting Aid Better' including fundraising, grantmaking, conferences, and peer-review processes, in partnership with faculty directors. Mobile and satellite-based poverty prediction technology developed under these programs was adopted by the Government of Togo to deliver cash rapidly recipients during COVID-19.
- Advised the UNHCR global task force on effective humanitarian targeting for refugees during COVID-19, synthesizing evidence across countries and sectors.

World Bank, Development Impact Evaluation (DIME) | Economist | 2014–2019

- Co-managed \$30m multi-donor trust fund to fund impact evaluations of World Bank projects; trained hundreds of high-level government officials and World Bank staff in quarterly impact evaluation workshops to embed impact measurement into their operations across multiple sectors; managed large teams of academics, government officials and Bank staff to design and execute evaluations.
- Founded and led the Data and Evidence for Justice Reform (DE JURE) program, working with judiciaries in ten countries to embed data, diagnostics and experimentation into their operations.
- Built a global evaluation program for the World Bank's Identification for Development (ID4D) initiative, working with six country governments to understand the impact of ID systems on individual welfare.
- \$900K randomized controlled trial of non-financial incentive interventions in Sierra Leone's public healthcare system, including during the 2014 Ebola outbreak; findings published in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics* and led the government to scale the successful interventions nationally.
- \$875K impact evaluation of Tanzania's Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system in Dar es Salaam; findings informed World Bank global urban development strategy; paper under revision at *American Economic Review*.
- Analyzed a corpus of 5M+ Indian court cases to test for presence of judicial bias across religion, gender, and caste; research published in *Review of Economics and Statistics*; findings reflected in public discourse on judicial reform in India and featured in major Indian media (Hindustan Times, Indian Express).
- \$800k impact evaluation of Philippines Supreme Court reform initiatives addressing court congestion and delays in justice delivery; findings presented to Supreme Court and adopted in national judicial strategy.
- Led impact evaluation of women's access to cash transfers in Pakistan's Benazir Income Support Program; research informed \$500M+ social protection financing, affecting 5M+ households.

- Represented the World Bank at the UN SDG secretariat and OECD convenings to advise on methodological approaches to defining and tracking progress on SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions).

Stanford University, Freeman Spogli Institute | Minerva Postdoctoral Fellow | 2012–2014

- Conducted global crisis response research under the US DoD's Empirical Studies of Conflict Project (ESOC), generating actionable insights for military, humanitarian and development actors worldwide.
- \$300K randomized controlled trial of post-war community reconciliation efforts in Sierra Leone to measure impacts on mental health and economic development; findings published in *Science* and widely cited in global discourse on post-conflict recovery and transitional justice.
- Conducted census of agricultural and mining concessions in Sierra Leone to resource governance and conflict; partnered with Stanford Design Lab to design interventions to mitigate conflict.

University of Oxford, Centre for the Study of African Economies | Research Officer | 2010–2011

- Member of FCDO funded research consortium tasked with conducting economic research to inform cross-sectoral government and donor strategy in the UK government's priority countries.
- \$500K randomized evaluations of justice interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone, examining legal aid effectiveness and institutional reform; research generated scalable models for improving access to justice in fragile states and shaped national legal aid policies; findings widely cited and influenced donor approaches to justice sector development and peacebuilding.

Center for Global Development | Research Associate | 2005–2006

- Conducted research on US development aid and African growth; monitored country qualification for the Millennium Challenge Account; co-authored policy briefs and tracking reports with senior fellows
- Co-authored peer-reviewed analysis of the determinants of successful Global Fund grant programs, published in *The Lancet* (2007).

WRITING

Research in progress

"Impacts of infrastructure: People versus place" (with C. Balboni, G. Bryan, M. Morten & C. O'Connor). 2025. Revise and resubmit, **American Economic Review**

"High frequency Engel and supply curves in general equilibrium: Experimental evidence from large universal cash transfers in Malawi" (with D. Egger, P. Kastrau, J. Walker). 2025.

» [Pre-analysis plan](#)

Journal articles

"In-group bias in the Indian judiciary: Evidence from 5 million criminal cases" (with E. Ash, S. Asher, A. Bhowmick, S. Bhupatiraju, D. Chen, T. Devi, C. Gossmann & P. Novosad). 2025. **Review of Economics & Statistics**, Vol 107, 1-45

» Press: [VoxDev](#), [Economic and Political Weekly](#), [Hindustan Times](#), [Indian Express](#), [Telegraph](#), [The Print](#), [News18](#), [Logical Indian](#), [Data for Justice](#), [Bar and Bench](#)

"Building resilient health systems: Experimental evidence from Sierra Leone and the 2014 Ebola outbreak" (with D. Christensen, O. Dube, J. Haushofer & M. Voors). 2020. **Quarterly Journal of Economics**, Vol. 136 (May), 1145-98

» Press: [New York Times](#), [NPR Hidden Brain](#), [CBS Chicago](#), [VoxEU](#)

"Could gentrification stop the poor from benefiting from urban improvements?" (with C. Balboni, G. Bryan & M. Morten). 2021. **American Economic Review (P&P)**, Vol. 111 (May), 532-37

"Community-based crisis response: Evidence from Sierra Leone's Ebola outbreak" (with D. Christensen, O. Dube, J. Haushofer & M. Voors). 2020. **American Economic Review (P&P)**, Vol. 110 (May), 260-64

"Reconciling after civil conflict increases social capital but decreases individual wellbeing" (with J. Cilliers & O. Dube). 2016. **Science**, Vol. 352 (May), Issue 6287, 787-794

» Press: [Washington Post](#), [NPR Hidden Brain](#), [Voice of America](#), [Le Monde](#), [Science Daily](#), [Daily Mail](#), [Pacific Standard](#), [Público](#), [El Espectador](#), [El Economista](#), [Diariomedico](#), [El Digital de Asturias](#), [Sinc](#), [Infosalus](#)

"The white-man effect: How foreigner presence affects behavior in experiments" (with J. Cilliers & O. Dube). 2015. **Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization**, Vol. 118 (Oct), 397-414

» Press: [NY Magazine](#), [Quartz](#), [Debraj Ray's blog](#)

"Global Fund grant programmes: An analysis of evaluation scores" (with S. Radelet). 2007. **Lancet**, Vol. 369 (May), 1807-13

Policy reports, book chapters & working papers

Scaling digital delivery in Malawi's social cash transfer program (with C. Mhango, Y. Mkandawire, J. Thunde, N. Srivastava, & T. A. Chibwana). 2025. IDinsight.

Impacts of judicial reforms to address court congestion and delays in justice in the Philippines (with A. Orbeta & V. Paqueo). 2021. International Initiative for Impact Evaluation.

Tracking concession activity: A census in Sierra Leone (with D. Christensen & M. Voors). 2019. International Growth Centre.

Science for Impact: Better Evidence for Better Decisions (with A. Legovini, F. Kondylis, et al.) The World Bank.

Reclaiming prosperity in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa: A medium-term strategy for inclusive growth (with K. Ikram, T. Hussain, et. al.). 2015. International Growth Centre.

"Delivering justice to the poor: Experimental evidence from Liberia" (with J. Sandefur). 2015. Mimeo.

Impact evaluation of Timap for Justice's Criminal Justice Project (with J. Sandefur & A. Varvaloucas). 2012. Centre for the Study of African Economies.

"Improving the justice sector: Law and institution building in Sierra Leone" (with A. Varvaloucas, S. Koroma, J. Sandefur & M. Turay). 2012. In O. Johnson (ed.) *Economic Challenges and Policy Issues in Early 21st Century Sierra Leone*. International Growth Centre.

"Rights or remedies? Shopping for justice in Liberia's dualistic legal system" (with J. Sandefur). 2011. In E. Harper (ed.), *Working with Customary Justice Systems in Post-Conflict and Fragile States*. International Development Law Organization.

Looking for justice: Liberian experiences with and perceptions of local justice options (with D. Isser, S. Lubkemann, S. N'Tow). 2009. United States Institute of Peace.

US development aid and the Millennium Challenge Account: Emerging trends in appropriations (with K. Brown & M. Sessions). 2006. Center for Global Development.

"Aiding development: Tracking the flows" *Finance & Development*, 42(3), Sept. 2005. IMF & World Bank.

US pledges of aid to Africa: Let's do the numbers (with S. Radelet). 2005. Center for Global Development

The New Global Governance Indicators and the Possible Impact on MCA Qualification (with S. Radelet & M. Dizolele)

Round Three of the MCA: Which Countries Are Most Likely to Qualify in FY 2006? (with S. Radelet & K. Brown)

GRANTS

2024	\$523,000	Hewlett Foundation – Social Justice Movements in Kenya*
	\$82,000	International Growth Centre (with D. Eggers, P. Kastrau, D. Stein)
2023	\$520,000	GiveDirectly (with P. Kastrau, D. Stein)
	\$500,000	Gates Foundation – Unlocking Public Financial Management in Kenya*
2021	\$449,000	Feed the Future Advancing Local Leadership Innovation and Network (with C. Amoatey)
	\$500,000	USAID – CEGA Development Impact Lab*
	\$87,000	Hilton Foundation – CEGA Forced Displacement Initiative*
2020	\$1,386,000	data.org Inclusive Growth & Recovery Challenge – CEGA Targeting Aid Better Initiative*
	\$900,000	Wellspring Foundation – CEGA Psychology and Economics of Poverty Initiative*
	\$500,000	Wellspring Foundation – CEGA Targeting Aid Better Initiative*
	\$250,000	Hewlett Foundation – Working Group in African Political Economy*
2019	\$100,000	Grand Challenges Canada (with G. Borker, N. Kalra, E. Steven & S. Likindikoki)
2018	\$675,000	Economic Development & Institutions (with S. Asher, M. Chemin, F. Kondylis & J. Sandefur)
	\$200,000	World Bank Global Road Safety Facility (with Y. Mchomvu)
2017	\$800,000	3ie Philippines Policy Window (with A. Orbeta & V. Paqueo)
	\$125,000	Stanford University SEED (with C. Balboni, G. Bryan & M. Morten)
	\$100,000	World Bank ieConnect Program (2 seed grants)
	\$80,000	World Bank Research Support Budget
2016	\$250,000	3ie Development Policy Window (with C. Balboni, G. Bryan & M. Morten)
	\$220,000	International Growth Centre (with C. Balboni, G. Bryan, & M. Morten)
	\$177,000	World Bank ieConnect Program (with C. Balboni, G. Bryan, & M. Morten)
	\$66,000	International Growth Centre (with D. Christensen & M. Voors)
2015	\$125,000	World Bank i2i Program (4 seed grants)
2013	\$215,000	J-PAL Governance Initiative (with J. Cilliers & O. Dube)
2012	\$432,000	USAID Development Innovation Ventures (with O. Dube & J. Haushofer)
2010	\$238,000	3ie Open Window 2 (with O. Dube)
	\$235,000	International Growth Centre (with P. Collier, O. Dube & V. Maru)
	\$185,000	International Growth Centre (with P. Collier & J. Sandefur)
2009	\$156,000	Open Society Justice Initiative (with J. Sandefur)

*=institutional grant, non-PI

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Affiliations

- Fellow (non-resident), Center for Global Development
- Fellow, Climatebase
- Member, Evidence in Governance and Politics
- Member, Empirical Studies of Conflict Project, Minerva Research Initiative
- Research Affiliate, Innovations for Poverty Action
- Research Affiliate, International Growth Centre

International representation

- Member, UNHCR Reference Group for the Evaluation of the Protection of Refugee Rights during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Member, UNDP-CoD Group of Experts on SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions
- Member, OECD-Open Society Foundation Taskforce on Access to Justice

Referee services

American Economic Review, American Political Science Review, Journal of Development Economics, World Development, Economic Development and Cultural Change, Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization, Review of International Organizations, Journal of Peace Research, Journal of Experimental Political Science, Journal of Development Studies, Journal of Economic Policy Reform, ACM COMPASS

Program committees

- Association of Computing Machinery COMPASS 2020, 2021, 2022
- International Conference on ICT and Development (ICTD) 2022
- Pacific Conference for Development Economics 2020
- Working Group on African Political Economy (WGAPE) 2016, 2020, 2021

Invited talks

- 2024 Shamiri Research Summit
- 2023 International Rescue Committee; IDinsight
- 2022 Mahbub ul Haq Research Centre
- 2019 World Bank Econothon, Economic Development and Institutions (EDI) Annual Conference
- 2018 European Parliament; European Commission (DG JUST, DG NEAR, ECFIN); EDI Policy Institute
- 2017 UK Dept. for International Development (DFID)
- 2015 University of Wageningen, Dept. of Economics; GWU, Dept. of Political Science
- 2014 World Bank, Development Research Group; LSE, Dept. of International Development
- 2013 DFID; UC Berkeley, Dept. of Economics; UC San Diego, School of International Relations and Pacific Studies; Stanford University, Center for International Security and Cooperation; Stanford University, Dept. of Political Science; Stanford University, Center on Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law; UT Austin, Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs; University of Namur, Dept. of Economics
- 2009 United States Institute of Peace–GWU Customary Justice & Legal Pluralism Conference (keynote)

Conference presentations

- 2019 Evidence to Action (E2A) 2019; FHI 360; EDI; Evidence in Governance and Politics (EGAP) 35; Working Group in African Political Economy (WGAPE)
- 2018 EGAP 34; EDI; Economics of Judicial Productivity Conference
- 2015 Annual Bank Conference in Development Economics; Annual Bank Conference on Africa
- 2014 Pacific Conference for Development Economics (PacDev)
- 2013 Northeast Universities Development Consortium Conference; American Political Science Association Annual Conference; Empirical Studies of Conflict Annual Conference; 17th World Congress of Int'l Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences; DIAL Development Conference; WGAPE; CSAE Annual Conference
- 2012 Symposium on Economic Experiments in Developing Countries (SEEDEC), WGAPE