Lontum Nchadze, Ph.D.

School of Public Policy, Oregon State University
2251 SW Campus Way, Corvallis, OR 97331
Email: sheylontum@gmail.com
Mobile: +1 (202) 650-9035
LinkedIn Profile
Personal Portfolio
GitHub
Google Scholar

Professional Summary

Development Economist and Policy Researcher specializing in causal impact evaluation, education policy, and development policy. I use experimental and quasi-experimental methods, economic analysis, and data-science tools to evaluate how the design and delivery of reforms shape outcomes, with a special interest in student learning and educational attainment. My work combines rigorous empirical research with extensive collaboration with governments, implementing organizations, funders, and academic partners, with an emphasis on translating evidence into policy and practice.

- **Research:** Lead Evaluator and Principal Investigator on randomized evaluations of foundational numeracy in Malawi and education financing in Cameroon; independent quasi-experimental research on education-system reform.
- **Policy Impact:** Research has informed the nationwide scale-up of Malawi's National Numeracy Programme into the National Mathematics Curriculum Reform and subsequent analysis of the reform at national scale.
- **Current Engagements:** Provide research, evaluation, and technical advisory support to the Prevail Fund on Malawi's National Mathematics Curriculum Reform and research and data expertise on confidential artificial intelligence projects through Mercor Intelligence.
- **Research Pipeline:** Invited as a Principal Investigator on IPA's proposed multi-country Numeracy Research and Development programme evaluation, focused on scalable early-grade numeracy interventions across several countries; selected by International Development Group as Industry Analysis Specialist for its City of Hillsboro, Oregon Economic Impact and Return on Public Investment proposal, leading industry-level analysis of economic development incentives and investment outcomes.

Education

Ph.D. in Public Policy, Oregon State University
Corvallis, OR, USA, December 2025.

- Dissertation: *Design, Delivery, and Duration: Evidence on Learning and Attainment from Malawi and Cameroon*
- Committee: Todd Pugatch, Alison Johnston (Co-chairs), Paul Thompson, Stephen Dundas, Dwaine Plaza (Members).
- Institutional GPA: 3.98/4.0.

M.Sc. in Economics, University of Buea
Buea, Cameroon, March 2016.

- Thesis: *The Effects of Output Diversification on the Cost Structure of Concession-holding Telecommunication Firms in Cameroon*.
- Institutional GPA: 3.63/4.0.

B.Sc. in Economics, University of Buea
Buea, Cameroon, December 2010.

- Thesis: *Aid Effectiveness in Cameroon's Agricultural Sector*.
- Institutional GPA: 3.19/4.0.

Research

Dissertation Papers

1. Foundational Numeracy at Scale? Experimental Evidence from Malawi

- Role: Lead Evaluator.
- Collaborators: Todd Pugatch, Evaewero French, Alperen Açıkol, Esme Kadzamira.
- Registry: AEA RCT Registry ID: AEARCTR-0011964
- Funding: UK Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO) and Prevail Fund.
- Implementation Partners: Malawi Ministry of Education (lead), Cambridge Education (implementer).

Abstract: Despite an increasing focus on foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) by the international community, numeracy has received much less attention than literacy. Numeracy programs which are successful at scale are particularly hard to find. We evaluate an at-scale foundational numeracy program in Malawi using a randomized controlled trial (RCT). The program shifts the focus of mathematics learning from rote memorization to problem solving and application, with teachers receiving training and materials to support this change. Using a matched school pairs design, we randomly assigned half of a sample of 150 government primary schools to the program (treatment group). The control group

continued to receive the traditional curriculum. Treatment schools receive the same program concurrently with 1,100 schools in an expanded pilot outside the RCT sample, making the evaluation represent a scaled curriculum reform. We find effects of 0.19 standard deviations (sd) of the program on numeracy, or 0.25 learning-adjusted years of schooling (LAYS). Treatment effects are largest at the top of the ability distribution and among students less likely to be poor. We also find high fidelity of the intervention and improvement in an index of teaching practices, consistent with the program theory of change. The results suggest the potential for meaningful changes in foundational numeracy at large scale in a low-income context. However, reaching the most disadvantaged students is more challenging.

2. Performance Incentives Can Backfire: Evidence from School Financing in Cameroon

- Role: Co-Principal Investigator.
- Collaborators: Todd Pugatch, Benjamin Fomba, Carrel Fokou, Eric Djimeu Wouabe.
- Registry: AEA RCT Registry ID: AEARCTR-0013589
- Funding: World Bank
- Implementation Partners: Cameroon Ministry of Basic Education (lead), PAREC (implementer).

Abstract: Public sector institutions in low- and middle-income countries face weak incentives to improve outcomes. Can performance incentives increase the productivity of school funds? We evaluate a performance-based financing (PBF) program for primary schools in Cameroon. We randomly assigned 240 schools to three versions of PBF: 1) an "inputs only" group that receives additional funds, but no incentives; 2) an "incentives only" group that receives additional funds for meeting school performance indicators; and 3) a combined "inputs plus incentives" group eligible for both types of funds. The experiment tests elements of a larger PBF program implemented by government at scale in 3,200 schools. We find no significant differences in student learning between the incentives-only and the unincentivized inputs-only groups. Compared to inputs-only, the inputs plus incentives version reduced learning outcomes, by -0.24 standard deviations in both French and mathematics. The inputs plus incentives group failed to improve outcomes even on the school performance indicators targeted by incentive payments. Administrative payments data reveal low implementation fidelity. In schools with poor program implementation, learning outcomes declined in incentivized compared to unincentivized schools. Inputs plus incentives schools which progressed most on incentivized indicators also saw the largest declines in learning, consistent with the program diverting attention from productive to unproductive activities for student learning. The results suggest performance incentives can backfire in settings with low institutional capacity.

3. School Duration and Educational Progression: Evidence from a Natural Experiment in Cameroon

- Independent Research.

Abstract: Progression from primary to secondary education remains a central challenge for educational development in many low- and middle-income countries. This paper examines whether school cycle design can affect that transition by studying Cameroon's 2006/2007 reform, which shortened the Anglophone primary school cycle from seven to six years to harmonize it with the Francophone system. Using the 2011 Cameroon Demographic and Health Survey, I exploit this reform as a natural experiment and estimate its effects with a difference-in-differences design comparing Anglophone cohorts exposed to the reform with contemporaneous Francophone cohorts. The reform increased the probability of entering secondary school by 9.4 percentage points, equivalent to about 13 percent relative to the pre-policy Francophone mean. By contrast, it produced no average change in timely educational progression, measured by whether students had reached the grade level expected for their cohort. Formal heterogeneity tests provide little evidence that the enrollment effect differed by gender, poverty status, or residence, although timely progression improved more in rural than in urban areas. The enrollment result is robust to alternative cohort windows, stricter outcome definitions, placebo tests, nonlinear specifications, and narrower control groups. The findings show that school-cycle reforms can affect educational transitions by changing the time required to reach secondary school.

Pipeline Projects

Principal Investigator, Numeracy Research & Development (NRD) Programme Evaluation (Invited by IPA & Genesis Analytics, funded by Gates Foundation)

- Multi-country R&D initiative to test scalable numeracy interventions across seven Sub-Saharan African countries.

Financial Modeling Expert, Scoping Study on Climate Transition & Global Financial Stability (invited by the World Bank, funded by the UK government)

- Tasked with modeling systemic risks of delayed EMDE climate transitions and implications for global financial stability.

Industry Analysis Specialist, City of Hillsboro Economic Impact & Return on Public Investment Analysis (selected by International Development Group)

- Lead Task 7 industry analysis, assessing the effectiveness of economic development incentives across major traded-sector industries and contributing to the broader economic impact and ROI analysis.

Pre-Analysis Plans

- Nchadze, L., Açıkol, A., French, E., Kadzamira, E., & Pugatch, T. (2023). *Malawi National Numeracy Programme Impact Evaluation*. *AEA RCT Registry*, Trial ID: AEARCTR-0011964.
- Djimeu Wouabe, E., Fokou, C., Fomba, B., Nchadze, L., & Pugatch, T. (2025). *Performance-Based Financing for Education in Cameroon*. *AEA RCT Registry*, Trial ID: AEARCTR-0013589.

Technical Reports

- Nchadze, L., French, E., Kadzamira, E., Pugatch, T., Açıkol, A., Chiwaula, L., & Meke, E. (2024). *Malawi National Numeracy Programme Evaluation: Baseline Report. Report prepared for FCDO & the Malawi Ministry of Education*.

- Djimeu Wouabe, E., Fokou, C., Fomba, B., Nchadze, L., & Pugatch, T. (2024). *Cameroon Education Performance-Based Financing Evaluation: Baseline Report. Report prepared for the World Bank and the Cameroon Education Reform Support Project (PAREC)*.

- Nchadze, L., Açıkol, A., Chiwaula, L., French, E., Kadzamira, E., Meke, E., & Pugatch, T. (2025). *Malawi National Numeracy Programme Evaluation Endline Report*. *Report prepared for FCDO & the Malawi Ministry of Education*.

- Djimeu Wouabe, E., Fokou, C., Fomba, B., Nchadze, L., Ngoko, E. H., & Pugatch, T. (2026). *Cameroon Education Performance-Based Financing Evaluation: Endline Report. Report prepared for the World Bank and the Cameroon Education Reform Support Project (PAREC)*.

Other Publications

- Nchadze, L. (2018). *Scope Economies in Cameroon's Telecommunications Sector*. *Proceedings of the 9th Economics & Finance Conference*, London, pp. 128-147.

Teaching Experience

Instructor of Record

Ethics in Public Policy (PPOL 413), in-person and Ecampus
Oregon State University, Spring 2021-Spring 2024 (6 terms)

- Designed and delivered course content in both in-person and online formats, focused on ethical frameworks and their application in public policy.
- Used interactive assignments and case studies, both historical and contemporary, to foster rigorous debates and train students in constructing valid arguments while analyzing complex ethical dilemmas.
- Leveraged my prior public service experience to illustrate real-world ethical dilemmas, providing students with practical insights into the challenges faced by policymakers.
- Student evaluations consistently exceeded department medians, with an average score of 5.9/6 for "Modeling and promoting inclusivity."

Introduction to International Relations (PS 205), Ecampus
Oregon State University, Winter 2023-Summer 2024 (3 terms)

- Taught foundational concepts in global politics, international organizations, and foreign policy analysis.

- Encouraged critical discussions on contemporary global issues through structured debates and simulations.

Research Methods (PS 300), in-person and Ecampus
Oregon State University, Winter 2022 and Summer 2023 (2 terms)

- Guided students through the complete research process, from formulating research questions to drafting comprehensive research papers.
- Facilitated hands-on lab sessions focused on the application of research techniques, training students in SPSS for quantitative analysis and NVivo for qualitative data analysis.
- Mentored students in applying research methods to develop and refine final research papers, emphasizing the integration of theory and practice.
- Supported student advancement by writing recommendation letters for six students who successfully proceeded to graduate school.

Science and Politics (PS 476), Ecampus
Oregon State University, Summer 2021 (1 term)

- Explored the intersection of scientific research and political decision-making processes.

Environmental Politics and Policy (PS 475), Ecampus
Oregon State University, Summer 2022 (1 term)

- Covered policy issues related to environmental governance, climate change, and sustainable development.

Teaching Assistant

Introduction to Microeconomics (ECON 201), in-person
Oregon State University, Winter 2021

- Led weekly discussion sections and provided tutoring for undergraduate students on microeconomic concepts.
- Assisted with grading assignments and exams, ensuring timely feedback.

Public Policy Analysis (ECON 539), in-person
Oregon State University, Winter 2021

- Supported graduate-level instruction by grading policy analysis assignments and mentoring students on their projects.

Professional Experience

Education Research and Evaluation Expert
Prevail Fund, New Haven, Connecticut, USA (Remote)
July 2026-Present

- Conduct decision-focused analysis of existing trial data to assess learning trajectories and the implications of earlier evaluation findings for Malawi's National Mathematics Curriculum Reform (NMCR), now operating at national scale.

Research and Data Expert
Mercor Intelligence, San Francisco, California, USA (Remote)
July 2026-Present

- Apply data analysis and evidence-assessment expertise to confidential artificial intelligence projects, supporting the development and evaluation of models for a leading AI laboratory.

Graduate Assistant
Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon, USA
December 2020-December 2025

Delivered undergraduate and graduate instruction in economics, public policy, and research methods as Instructor of Record; designed course content, led applied data workshops, and mentored graduate students. Applied advanced econometric and economic modeling techniques to examine the impact of educational interventions and policies on learning and other community-level outcomes. Led cross-sector collaborations with national governments, international agencies, and academic partners to support policy reforms informed by evidence.
Key Achievements:

- Teaching & Mentorship
  - Taught five undergraduate courses as instructor of record and supported two additional undergraduate and graduate courses as a teaching assistant, with student evaluations averaging 4.8+/5.
  - Introduced SPSS and NVivo into the research methods curriculum.
  - Mentored 20+ undergraduate students, with the majority securing admission to competitive PhD and MPA programs.
  - Mentored 4 doctoral students in pedagogy and course preparation.
  - Awarded the Graduate Teaching Excellence Award (2023).
- Research
  - Led a cluster-randomized controlled trial (RCT) of Malawi's National Numeracy Programme (NNP), covering 9,400 students in 150 schools.
  - Co-led an impact evaluation of performance-based financing (PBF) in Cameroon covering 6,400 students in 320 schools, including a 240-school cluster-randomized controlled trial (RCT).

  - Designed mobile-based survey tools and automated dashboards to reduce data errors and accelerate analysis.
  - Provided training for 200+ local enumerators and Ministry staff on ethics and data quality best practices.
  - Co-authored technical reports and research papers.
- Outreach
  - Delivered policy briefs and technical guidance to government agencies, implementers, and funders for Malawi NNP and Cameroon PBF, informing data-driven education reform strategies.

Project Assistant
OSU Policy Analysis Laboratory, Oregon, USA
June 2023-March 2024
Planned and organized international trade policy research on industrial hemp, focusing on regulation and market access between the U.S. and the EU. Delivered strategic support in data synthesis, literature reviews, and stakeholder communications.
Key achievements

- Co-authored a white paper used by the National Industrial Hemp Council to advocate for harmonized EU import standards.
- Identified regulatory gaps that informed 5 policy briefs and a strategic policy roadmap.

Statistical Analyst
Cameroon Ministry of Finance, Yaoundé, Cameroon
October 2011-December 2020
Collected and analyzed national financial and economic data to inform fiscal policy. Developed and maintained statistical models for forecasting government revenue, expenditure, and macroeconomic indicators. Prepared technical reports and policy briefs to support decision-making. Collaborated with cross-ministerial teams and international partners to ensure data alignment with global financial standards and reporting frameworks. Maintained data quality and integrity through regular audits, validation protocols, and capacity-building workshops for regional data officers.

Key Achievements:

- Reduced data inconsistencies in national reports by 50% by building automated validation workflows using R and Excel.
- Accelerated executive decision-making with real-time dashboards tracking key financial indicators across departments.
- Strengthened budgeting transparency by synthesizing large datasets into actionable quarterly policy briefs.

- Led 20+ staff trainings on statistical tools and data-quality practices.

Consultant: Governance and Democracy Initiative
Nkafu Policy Institute, Yaoundé, Cameroon
August 2018-October 2018
Designed and conducted a nationwide public opinion poll on democracy, governance, and the rule of law in Cameroon.
Key Achievements:

- Delivered a technical report adopted by local advocacy coalitions and reported in national newspapers.
- Co-facilitated stakeholder workshops, reaching over 200 participants across the political spectrum.

Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist (Practicum)
Accountability Lab Liberia, Monrovia, Liberia
April 2018-June 2018
Designed and implemented M&E frameworks for youth-led civic engagement projects. Revised logical frameworks and supported donor reporting.

Key Achievements:

- Created an M&E toolkit still in use by program officers across Liberia, Nigeria, and Senegal.
- Increased program feedback loop efficiency through interactive data dashboards.
- Supported USAID and UNDP grant reporting and compliance audits.

Selected Conferences and Presentations

Academic Presentations

- *2026 AEA Annual Meeting*, The Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA (January 3-5, 2026)
  - Session: "RCTs in Early Learning: What Works to Boost Foundational Skills?"
  - Title: "Foundational Numeracy at Scale? Experimental evidence from Malawi"
- *2025 APPAM Annual Fall Research Conference*, Hyatt Regency Seattle, Seattle, Washington, USA (November 12-15, 2025)
  - Session: "Innovation in the Public, Private, and Nonprofit Sectors", Discussant
  - Session: "Methods Student Research Panel", Discussant
- *2025 Northwest Development Workshop*, Reed College, Portland, Oregon, USA (May 9, 2025).
  - Session: "Education, human capital, and development"

  - Title: "Foundational Numeracy at Scale? Experimental evidence from Malawi"
- *2024 What Works Hub for Global Education Annual Conference*, Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford, UK (September 25-26, 2024).
  - Session: "Testing scalable models"
  - Title: "Malawi National Numeracy Programme Evaluation"
- *9th Economics and Finance Conference*, University of London, London, UK (May 22-25, 2018).
  - Title: "Scope Economies in Cameroon's Telecommunications Sector"

Non-Academic Presentations

- **"The Role of Research and Data in Effective Public Management"**
  Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) 10th Anniversary Summit, Washington, DC, USA.
  May 26, 2021
  - Invited panelist at a summit organized by the State Department in collaboration with the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.
- **"Challenges to Advocacy Work in Africa: Problems and Proposed Solutions"**
  Youth Advocacy Training for Sustainable Development Goals, Embassy of the United States, Monrovia, Liberia.
  April 27, 2018
  - Delivered as an invited speaker.
- **"The Value of Your HPD: Pathways to Success in a Globalized World"**
  Academic Lecture, Convocation Ceremony for Higher Professional Diploma Graduates, Grass Field Politechnic, Bamenda, Cameroon.
  December 13, 2015
  - Delivered as an invited speaker, addressing pathways to global professional success.

Service and Outreach

Member, Disability Emergency Management Advisory Council (DEMAC)
Oregon, USA, March 2021-Present

- Provide guidance to state agencies on disaster planning, response, and recovery to ensure inclusivity for people with disabilities.

Graduate Student Representative, OSU Recreational Sports Advisory Board
Corvallis, Oregon, USA, September 2022-June 2024

- Represented the interests of graduate students with the University's recreational sports center.
- Provided input on programming and services to promote student engagement and well-being.

Peer Reviewer
Discover Education
May 2026-Present

- Serve as an ad hoc peer reviewer for manuscripts in education research; completed two reviews to date.

2023 Pacific Conference for Development Economics (PacDev)
December 2022-January 2023

- Reviewed and scored conference submissions for consideration for presentation.

Mandela Washington Fellowship Reader
October-November 2018; October-November 2022

- Reviewed and scored applications for the 2019 and 2023 cohorts of the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders.
- Assisted in identifying outstanding candidates for the program, which supports emerging leaders in Africa.

Communications Coordinator
Africa Files, Toronto, Canada, March 2015-March 2016

- Managed the InfoServ section of the Africa Files website, curating and publishing relevant content.
- Served as editor for Economic Justice and Western Region topics, coordinating volunteer editors and contributors globally.

Awards and Honors

Special Prize for Leadership
YALI Regional Leadership Center, Accra, Ghana, December 2016

- Recognized for outstanding leadership during the 5th cohort of the YALI Regional Leadership Center training at the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA).

Most Influential Fellow
Lions Group, Accra, Ghana, December 2016

- Elected by peers as the most influential fellow during the 5th cohort of the YALI Regional Leadership Center West Africa.

Best Level 200 Economics Student
University of Buea Economics Society (UBES), Buea, Cameroon, June 2008

- Awarded for academic excellence as the overall best Economics student in Level 200.

Other Training

BREAD-IGC Virtual PhD Course
Bureau for Research and Economic Analysis of Development (BREAD) and International Growth Centre (IGC), Spring 2022

- Modules on education; credit, insurance, and risk; and migration

IZA/FCDO Online Short Course on Research Skills for Sub-Saharan Africa
London School of Economics and Institute of Labor Economics (IZA), December 2020

- Covered various aspects of the research pipeline, including applying for grants, writing academic papers, presenting at workshops and conferences, and publishing at international levels.

Data Science Specialization
Johns Hopkins University (Coursera Platform), October 2020

- Completed courses in Statistics, Data Processing, and R Programming, developing skills in data manipulation and analysis.

Statistics with R Specialization
Duke University (Coursera Platform), April 2020

- Completed coursework in Probability and Data, Inferential Statistics, Linear Regression and Modeling, Bayesian Statistics, and a capstone project.

Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders
Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia, USA, August 2017

- Completed six weeks of intensive training in Public Policy Management, including academic sessions, workshops, site visits, and a capstone project.
- Participated in a three-day summit in Washington, DC, receiving a diploma from Georgia State University and a certificate from the U.S. Department of State.

YALI Emerging Leaders Program
YALI Regional Leadership Center, Accra, Ghana, December 2016

- Completed five weeks of training with modules in Leadership, Ethics, Contemporary Issues, and Public Management.

Languages

- **English** (Native)
- **French** (Intermediate)

References

Dr. Todd Pugatch
Dissertation Committee Co-Chair
Associate Professor of Economics
University at Buffalo
Email: tpugatch@buffalo.edu
Phone: +1 (202) 236-7467

Dr. Alison Johnston
Dissertation Committee Co-Chair
Professor of Political Science and Public Policy
Oregon State University
Email: alison.johnston@oregonstate.edu
Phone: +1 (541) 737-6243

Dr. Paul Thompson
Dissertation Committee Member
Associate Professor of Economics
Oregon State University
Email: paul.thompson@oregonstate.edu
Phone: +1 (541) 737-8185

Dr. Dwaine Plaza
Dissertation Committee Member
Professor of Sociology
Oregon State University
Email: dplaza@oregonstate.edu
Phone: +1 (541) 737-5369