The Center for Development Economics and Policy (CDEP) supports microeconomic research to investigate the sources of poverty and to inform practical interventions to address them. The year 2014–2015 was one of great growth for CDEP, with the addition of a new initiative (“Politics, Institutions, and Conflict”), the inaugural year of a new grant program, and a number of high-profile events.

New Initiative Launched on “Politics, Institutions, and Conflict”

The Politics, Institutions, and Conflict Initiative sees conflict and disorder as one of the greatest threats to development and the development of good government as a means to economic prosperity as well as an important end in itself. But what is “good government” and how does it come about, both historically and in the modern day? What causes conflict, and what policies and interventions can move violent fighting into the realm of peaceful political competition?

CDEP Affiliate Chris Blattman is leading the Politics, Institutions, and Conflict Initiative, which includes projects on the following topics:

- Social Engineering in the Tropics: Case Study Evidence from East Congo
- Worker Mobility in a Global Labor Market: Evidence from the United Arab Emirates
- Predicting Local Violence
- Bandits or States? Stationary Bandits and Taxation in Eastern Congo
- Cultivation Practices and Access to Credit
- Acting Like a State? Foreign Aid and Political Opinions

CDEP Student Research Grant Program

CDEP conducted the first round of its new Student Research Grant Program in May 2015. The program is available to graduate students at Columbia University conducting predissertation and dissertation research. On June 5, six students were awarded grants for the following projects:

- Anthony D’Agostino: “Climate Change and Credit in Rural India”
- Maria Micaela Sviatschi: “Schooling and Labor Responses to Heterogeneous Commodity Price Shocks: Evidence from Peru”
- Jorge Mangone: “A Legal Empowerment RCT in the Chaco Region, Argentina”
- Ashna Arora: “Yeh Panchayats in Haryana”
- Nicolás De Roux: “Cultivation Practices and Access to Credit”
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Selected Events

A Discussion with Dr. Donald Kaberuka, President of the African Development Bank

April 20, 2015

CDEP hosted a discussion with Dr. Donald Kaberuka, president of the African Development Bank. Dr. Kaberuka, Rwanda’s minister of finance and economic planning from 1997 to 2005, spoke about the economic challenges facing African countries.

BREAD Conference

CDEP hosted the 29th Conference of the Bureau of Research in the Economic Analysis of Development (BREAD), the leading research network of development economists in the world (http://bread.org/bread/conferences/bread-29-conference). The conference included presentations of research papers on air pollution and productivity in an Indian garment factory, on a randomized experiment of offering industrial jobs to low-skilled workers in Ethiopia, on how the incentives of bureaucrats interact with the incentives of elected politicians, on audits of the quality of health care providers in India, on empowering recipients to improve the administration of a food-aid program in Indonesia, on incentivizing consumers to improve tax enforcement in Brazil, and on the value of allowing environmental inspectors to exercise discretion in deciding which polluters to audit.

Other Events

CDEP hosted 39 other events during the year; 15 of these were talks by outside speakers in the CDEP Development Workshop speaker series; 25 were talks by PhD students in SIPA and the Economics Department, either in the CDEP Development Workshop speaker series or in a brown bag student colloquium. The full list is available on the CDEP events page: http://cdep.sipa.columbia.edu/events-calendar.

New Projects

“Understanding Human Capital Accumulation in Developing Countries: A Field Experiment with Adaptive Technologies”: http://cdep.sipa.columbia.edu/initiatives/human-capital/education


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