

Date

August 28, 2024

Data Science, Economics, and Social Change: Nouréini Sayouti's Journey to Tackling Poverty Through Research

As part of its Researcher Diversification Strategy, IPA supports early career researchers from and in low- and middle-income countries to build evidence-to-policy pipelines and enhance the quality of development research. This blog series features their journeys, achievements, and the work they're doing to tackle critical issues in the countries where IPA has a presence.



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Nouréini Sayouti has always been interested in understanding the root cause of poverty. Growing up in Benin, his curiosity and drive led him to earn a diploma in engineering in Morocco, as well as a Master's Degree in Econometrics and Data Science and PhD in Economics, both in France.

During his studies in France, Nouréini focused his thesis on poverty and the impact of policies on food security in the Sahel region. His research delved into the nutritional intake of pastoralist households, a challenging task due to their mobility and the harsh climate-related issues they face. He evaluated the impact of government policies on these households, uncovering the underlying mechanisms that influence their nutritional intake and well-being. He also used machine learning to predict household resilience against poverty in Nigeria and Uganda.

"Coming from Benin, these subjects are deeply important to me. I believe that to have a meaningful impact, especially in helping people in difficult situations, we must contribute by aiding policymakers in making better decisions."

His desire to see research applied in the real world brought Nouréini to Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA). Before joining IPA, his career spanned over six years of collaboration with NGOs and international development banks, where he focused on agricultural development, youth unemployment, and climate-related challenges.

Nouréini also worked with agricultural technology start-ups, where he focused on using machine learning and artificial intelligence to better inform food companies about climate-related issues and to support better technical and economic decision-making. Now at IPA, he applies his data science and econometrics skills for poverty reduction and sustainability.

Nouréini believes that academic publications play a crucial role in policymaking, but the true impact lies in how these findings are implemented to influence policy and create tangible change. At IPA, he sees the opportunity to bridge this gap and apply research directly to improve lives.

"I have the opportunity to witness and contribute to the practical implementation of research, making a tangible difference in policy and practice through my work with IPA."

Coming from a low and middle-income country (LMIC), Nouréini recognizes the challenges many researchers face, such as limited access to funding, training, and opportunities to showcase their work.

"It is crucial to have more LMIC researchers because they bring a deep understanding of the local context that Western experts, despite their credentials and resources, may lack. Diversifying the pool of researchers enriches projects with insights that are contextually relevant and practical. Collaboration between local researchers and those from the West can lead to more impactful and effective research outcomes."

Through initiatives like the [Researcher Diversification Strategy](#), he believes IPA and others can help bridge the gap and foster a more inclusive research community.

"My advice for aspiring researchers is to choose a subject you are passionate about and embrace it with dedication and patience. Be sure about where you want to make an impact and find a place where you can fully express your potential. Follow your passion and be convinced that your work can be relevant and contribute to making meaningful changes in

policy."