Job description
Research Assistant

Precision Agriculture for Development, Inc. (PAD) seeks a Research Assistant to support research activities across our projects and geographies. PAD was established with a keen eye towards rigorous evaluation and constant experimentation. Each of our programs has a strong complement of research, ranging from large- and small-scale randomized controlled trials (RCTs) to A/B tests to pilot trials. Most of PAD’s research projects are led by Shawn Cole (Harvard Business School) and Michael Kremer (Harvard University). PAD’s research activities are also supported by affiliated researchers from other institutions and are overseen by PAD’s Boston-based Senior Researcher.

This is an exciting and rare opportunity to contribute to academic-caliber research through a global start-up non-profit organization. This job is ideal for someone with enthusiasm for empirical research in international development and an interest in learning new data management and analysis skills. Junior researchers with long term interests in pursuing a PhD in economics, applied economics, or public policy are encouraged to apply.

Organization background

PAD is a US-based non-profit organization with a mission to support smallholder farmers in developing countries by providing customized agricultural information and services that increase productivity, profitability, and environmental sustainability. PAD is pioneering a model for agricultural extension: delivering farmers personalized agricultural advice via their mobile phones. PAD implements this model in collaboration with partner organizations and gathers evidence on its impact. PAD aims to improve the lives of 100 million farmers in developing countries with its services.

The initial phase of PAD’s work consisted of testing the impact of similar mobile phone-based agricultural extension services in multiple contexts across the developing world. That research found that while careful attention to design and context and careful evaluation was critical, mobile phone-based agricultural extension could increase adoption of appropriate farm management practices, yields, and incomes, with point estimates suggesting a benefit cost ratio of 10/1. Based on our initial evidence around a proof of concept technology, PAD began working with partners capable of scaling and further testing this approach, while simultaneously continuing to build its own research efforts.

A key element of our approach is helping partners with wide reach – such as governments, contract farming organizations, telecommunications firms, agribusiness, and NGOs – to design, build, evaluate, and improve customized mobile phone-based agricultural advisory systems. We help partners structure and improve their service offerings through incorporation of the latest availability technologies and data as well as insights from
behavioral economics and social learning theory. Taking a global approach, we bring experience on what has worked elsewhere to every engagement and continue to optimize to local contexts using A/B testing and rigorous evaluation.

PAD currently has operations in four countries (India, Kenya, Pakistan, Ethiopia), is advising a partner in Rwanda, and is working towards new endeavors in Ecuador and Uganda. These opportunities have allowed PAD to reach over 345,000 farmers by end-2017, both with our own services and research efforts as well as through partnerships.

Responsibilities

The Research Assistant will support various research activities across PAD projects. Specific responsibilities will include:

1. Assist with the development of data collection and entry tools
2. Clean and prepare datasets for analysis (household survey data, administrative data from PAD and partner systems, external administrative data sets, etc.)
3. Support researchers in data analysis
4. Draft write-up of results (academic papers, policy briefs, presentations, etc.)
5. Provide regular update reports to Principal Investigators and other research staff
6. Other duties to support research activities, as needed

Qualifications

Interested candidates with the following set of qualifications are encouraged to apply:

- Bachelor's degree in economics, agricultural economics, public policy, international relations, or a related discipline with an impressive transcript/grades
- Excellent skills in Stata
- Knowledge of R and Python preferred
- Background in randomized field experiments a plus, but not required
- Familiarity with development economics and/or data science research preferred
- Excellent writing skills
- Strong organizational skills
- Highly flexible and adaptable
- Works well with others, especially with individuals across cultures and contexts

Position details

- Full time
- Start date: ASAP
- Location: Ethiopia, India, Kenya, or Pakistan; contingent on needs and conditional on local work authorization
- Compensation: commensurate with experience
- To apply: Submit a cover letter, CV, and college transcripts (unofficial okay) to jobs@precisionag.org. Please reference “Global Research Assistant” in the subject line. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis.