

SUMMARY

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Almost all of my time was spent working on a project in Malawi on the adoption of more sustainable farming practices. Based on the premise that farmers were unwilling to adopt technologies like pit planting and composting because of uncertainty as to whether or not they were effective, the study tried to avoid the failures of previous extension techniques by convincing peer farmers, a few average farmers in the village from different social groups, to try out the technology first, and tell other farmers about it. This was compared against the older strategies of having a single, better-off lead farmer try it first, and telling people about the technology without having anyone try it first. Much data was collected and will be used when the project is complete, to test many hypotheses. I worked briefly on a project in Bangladash that studied techniques to convince people to use better sanitation technologies.

I coded data from questionnaires of general information about each village into excel. I did some work on what should be included in the next round of questionnaires. I created and wrote a detailed explanation of model of communication by lead and peer farmers. I coded stata data from questionnaires for AEDO workers, lead farmers, and peer farmers. I did a literature review on the topic of the effectiveness of different forms of nutrient management using maize residue. I created a model of adoption of sanitation technologies.

What I learned about how to make models and incorporate them into economics research I think could be useful. In general the practice dealing with data, reviewing literature, and writing up explanations gave me a basic introduction to research. I also found learning about the topic interesting.

Sadly, although it is necessary, dealing with large blocks of data is never fun, interesting, or educational, which is one reason research assistants are assigned to do it. I liked everything else I did, though. Prof. Mobarak was an excellent person to work with. He responded rapidly to all of my questions when he wasn't away in Africa getting killed by elephants (and then there were other people I could talk to instead) and was flexible in adapting my responsibilities to better suit my interests and skills.