



## THE DPRU AREAS OF EXPERTISE

**Who are we?** The [Development Policy Research Unit \(DPRU\)](#) aims to inform economic and social policymaking by specialising in academically rigorous research into various socio-economic challenges in South Africa and Africa in general. The DPRU attempts to understand the causes, and to propose policy solutions in areas such as the labour market, education, regulation and governance; competition policy and so on.

Our three core objectives are to foster high quality, policy relevant research within the DPRU; engage in teaching activities and train a new generation of research economists within the Unit. We aim to disseminate information and knowledge to decision- and policy-makers in government, the private sector and civil society.

Comprised of 14 research analysts, the DPRU is a university-recognised research unit located within the School of Economics at the University of Cape Town. Having been actively engaged in policy-relevant research for over 25 years, the Unit has established itself as one of SA's premier research institutions in the field. DPRU research regularly feeds into Cabinet processes, policy decisions, and pronouncements at the highest level. We also enjoy robust links to both African research networks including the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) and a host of international research institutions and think tanks such as Brookings and UNU-WIDER, as well as global organisations like the World Bank, the UNDP, IDRC and DFID-UK.

### Research

The DPRU's current key areas of expertise revolve around providing economic expertise in relation to research questions around labour market, poverty and inequality dynamics in South Africa and Africa more generally. While these three thematic areas constitute the core focus of the Unit's research work, researchers do engage in projects concentrating on related issues such as industrial policy, financial development, trade and demography. The bulk of our research derives from the analysis and manipulation of micro-level datasets, such as individual and household surveys, firm surveys, national censuses and increasingly, administrative databases.

The Unit's expanding research into minimum wages (specifically the debate around a national minimum wage for South Africa, as well as the impact of minimum wages on employment, wages and hours of work, together crucially with the role played by enforcement agencies in determining the outcomes from such legislation) is particularly noteworthy. Other key policy issues include understanding and measuring the rise of labour brokers in the economy; estimating the role of women in the economy; measuring changes in non-income poverty and inequality since 1994, and the determinants of a pro-poor growth strategy for South Africa. The resulting body of new and innovative policy work has arguably made significant advances in understanding the South African labour market.

The DPRU's initiation of a more active research agenda on Sub-Saharan Africa is, in particular, grounded in empirical labour economics but applied to low income countries in Africa. This is virgin territory globally, and as a consequence has placed the Unit at the forefront of a unique and innovative global programme.

We also engage in a variety of interesting international studies such as the [National Transfer Accounts \(NTA\)](#) – an IDRC funded international research project which aims to measure and understand the generational economy; and [Evidence and Lessons from Latin America \(ELLA\)](#) – examining informality and inclusive growth based on comparative research conducted with a paired research centre in Colombia.

## Project Management

The DPRU has extensive experience in programme management, providing technical assistance and expertise to a diverse range of national and international projects, such as the [Employment Promotion Programme \(EPP\)](#); [Understanding Africa's Lions](#) – discussing growth traps and opportunities for six African economies; [Counting Women's Work \(CWW\)](#) – a multi-country research effort incorporating unpaid work into the National Transfer Accounts framework; and the World Bank's [Network on Jobs for Development](#) (previously the Jobs Knowledge Platform (JKP)).

## Societal Engagement, Outreach & Research Impact

The DPRU's intention is always to combine academically credible, rigorous research, analysis and policy commentary, with high-level policy impact and focus from our research. Themes explored within the Unit's research programme are of interest and value to communities and the society at large, and are frequently topics which lend themselves to vigorous public debate and societal commentary. A fair amount of media coverage, as well as high levels of web hits and publication downloads are testimony to the growing public awareness and relevance of the DPRU's research programme, and the success of our communications and dissemination activities.

Our social media networks (Prof. Borhat's professional [Twitter](#) feed and the DPRU's [Facebook](#) page in particular), boast high follower numbers and generate a substantial amount of activity. Importantly, the audience responsible for this active engagement range from students to academics, journalists, as well as policy makers and government officials. DPRU researchers frequently contribute content to blogging channels (e.g. [Jobs & Development Blog](#) and [Africa in Focus](#)), and we host, manage and maintain digital platforms for clients such as [Counting Women's Work \(CWW\)](#) and the [Employment Promotion Programme \(EPP\)](#).

The DPRU also organises events such as workshops and conferences, as a means to disseminate our research. Audiences are encouraged to discuss the research presented in a robust manner: where appropriate, events and conferences hosted by the DPRU are facilitated via Chatham House rules, further encouraging and stimulating debates and discourse around research topics presented. Participants at these events are varied and usually made up of policy makers, academics, government officials (from South Africa and abroad), and officials from international agencies, such as the World Bank and United Nations.

## Administrative Functioning

While research and project management activities (such as EPP) are completed by the DPRU, all contractual and financial agreements are with the University of Cape Town (UCT), as the Unit does not have a legal status. All processes and transactions are governed by the strict controls of the University. The UCT Finance, Research Contracts, and Intellectual Property Service offices provide legal and financial services to the Unit and ensure that all agreements are in accordance with UCT's requirements.