

Allison Benson Hernandez

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Profile

Colombian economist and PhD in International Development, with 12 years of experience in public policy, research, and social incidence. I have experience working with international cooperation agencies leading large-scale program evaluations, including methodological design, overseeing data collection processes and leading communications, learning and adapting strategies. I have worked advising senior government officials in strategic planning and in the design, implementation, and evaluation of public policies, and interinstitutional projects. As an academic I have published research on social and economic topics, including inequality, rural development, and education. As a social entrepreneur, I lead a community think tank that enables cross-sectoral dialogue and collaboration to reduce inequality in Colombia. I have skills and experience in strategic planning, team leadership, critical thinking, mixed methods research, and communications for social change.

Education

2019	PhD <i>International Development</i>	LSE	London, UK
2016	Master in Research <i>International Development</i>	LSE	London, UK
2012	MA in <i>Economics (honors)</i>	Universidad de los Andes	Bogotá, Colombia
2011	BA in <i>Economics</i>	Universidad de los Andes	Bogotá, Colombia

Professional Experience

Jul. 2020 – currently. Founding Director, Acción Pública and Reimaginemos, Colombia

- Build an engaged research network of 300+ people from 35 different professions carrying out research and social dialogue processes on topics related to top inequalities.
- Lead the production of 40+ research-news articles analysing multidimensional inequality
- Lead the strategic communications strategy including social media and publications in El Espectador and 13 other newspapers around the country

Sept. 2023 – currently. Inequality Research Facility Coordinator, French Development Agency (AFD), Colombia

- Coordinate and supervise the activities of the Facility in producing knowledge and disseminating results across stakeholders from different sectors
- Support the Government of Colombia in the implementation of public policies directed towards the reduction of inequality.

Dec. 2021 – Dec. 2022. Evaluation Leader, USAID – MSI, Colombia

- Coordinate the performance evaluation of USAID's Victims Institutional Strengthening Program (VISP), a program that builds institutional capacity in public actors and victim's organization to

Nov. 2021- Jan. 2022. Consultant, FAO, Colombia

- Methodological and technical advisor for the participatory design of the peasant public policy in Colombia, articulating agencies of the Government of Colombia, social organizations and international cooperation

Oct. 2020 – Dec 2021. Evaluation Leader, USAID – MSI, Colombia

- Coordinate the impact and performance evaluation of USAID's Rural Finance Initiative (RFI), a program aimed at supporting financial institutions and public actors in the development of financial products and services for underserved rural populations in Colombia.

Jan. 2020 – Dec.2020- Advisor, Department for Social Prosperity, Colombia

- Lead the design of the Poverty Alleviation Route, including its conceptual proposal and the implementation of its pilot.

Feb. 2018 - Aug. 2018 - Consultant, KFW, Germany

- Diagnosis and policy recommendations for a national program to support rural cooperatives and associations, with an emphasis on peace building areas.

Jan. 2017- Feb. 2017 – Research Assistant, London School of Economics, UK

- Review of impact evaluations of programs for women’s empowerment and entrepreneurial formation in developing countries.

Jan.2013- Aug.2015 - Advisor, National Planning Department, Colombia

- Advisor for the Sectorial Deputy Director. Advised the coordination group of the National Development Plan Bases. Advised the elaboration of policy documents for the National Council for Economic and Social Policy.

Aug.2011-Dic.2012 - Research Assistant, Center for Research in Economic Development - CEDE, Universidad de los Andes, Colombia

- Impact evaluation of the YouthSave financial inclusion program (Save the Children, Mastercard Foundation and Center for Social Development- Washington University in St. Louis). Survey design, evaluation design, econometric analysis.
- Database building and regression analysis on topics including education, CCTs, violence and crime.

Teaching Experience

Sept. 2016-Jul. 2019 Teaching Assistant, LSE, UK

Development Management, MSc Development Management
Development in the International Political Economy

Aug.2011-Dec.2012 Teaching Assistant, Universidad de Los Andes, Colombia

Introduction to Macroeconomics, BA in economics
Microfinance: New theoretical and empirical findings, BA in economics
Advanced Macroeconomics, MA in Economics
Regulatory Policy and Competition, MA in Economics

Honors and Awards

2022-2023 **Obama Foundation’s Scholar at Columbia University.** Selected as one of 12 global rising leaders to participate in a 9-month leadership and social impact program aimed at strengthening skills and networks for social transformation.

Academic Publications

- Benson, A.& Faguet, J.P. (2022) “*Increasing access to agricultural credit: the Role of Rural Producer Organizations*.” The Journal of Development Studies, DOI: 10.1080/00220388.2022.2102899
- Benson, A. (2021). "From targeted private benefits to public goods: Land, distributive politics and changing political conditions in Colombia" World Development, Vol. 146.
- Benson, A. “More Profitable Projects, Access to Information or a Safety Net? How Collective Action Reduces Credit Constraints”. (To be published).
- Benson, A. (2012). “The effects of Familias en Acción on the quality of the educational supply”. Desarrollo Y Sociedad, 70; 51 – 91.

Academic Conferences

2019 Colombian Economics Conference – Universidad de Los Andes

2017 - 2019 Long range development in Latin America – Stanford, LSE, Universidad de Los Andes

2012 Symposium on International Research and Innovation at Washington University in St. Louis.
Challenges and opportunities for youth saving: the case of Colombia and the YouthSave Project.

Languages

English (fluent), French (proficient), Spanish (native language)