

# Mellon Award Fieldwork Report

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This Mellon award through UW-Madison IRIS supported the development of a research project in Senegal. I spent eight weeks in summer 2017, followed by seven weeks in winter 2017-2018, exploring two possible projects, and then narrowing my focus to collect pilot data for one of the projects.

During the summer visit to Senegal, I first explored the feasibility of conducting research with small shopkeepers and their suppliers. I spoke with shopkeepers across the city, as well as seeking out their suppliers in some cases, to learn more about the relations across shops, and between shops and suppliers. In particular, I was interested in the structure of price negotiations, and the formal or informal links between shops that may shift their bargaining power. This initial research was both useful and interesting, but in the end I decided that this may not be a feasible research direction for developing my dissertation.

During that same visit, I began speaking with individuals working in the peanut value chain. Specifically, I interviewed an owner of a peanut shelling facility that exports shelled peanuts in bulk to China. He described the challenges they face in rewarding transporters for quality. After these interviews, and during the fall, I continued to develop ideas for this project. During the second visit to Senegal, I used the remainder of the award funds to conduct two field visits in the cities of Touba and Kaolack, the main centers of this industry, to interview individuals working in the transport and resale of peanuts. We used these interviews to develop and refine the design of a survey. I then worked with a team of four enumerators to launch and run a survey of about 150 transporters and resellers. We used this survey to learn more about the relations between transporters, collection points, and large-scale buyers like oil factories and shellers. We also wanted to learn how individuals assess quality, and how they make decisions within the market. Finally, we wanted to learn about the risk preferences of traders, as this may play a key role in developing an experiment.

The results of this survey, along with connections developed during my visit, will allow me to develop several lines of research. I hope to conduct an experiment in the market that tests the effectiveness of offering transporters targeted bonuses for delivering high quality peanuts. Additionally, I will use historical market-level data to explore the implications of deregulation of exports on the behavior of local market actors. I also hope to partner with research institutions working in the country to evaluate the roll-out of a new product for farmers that can reduce the incidence of aflatoxin and possibly unlock higher prices and new export markets. The Mellon award made all of these projects possible.