

**Buffett Undergraduate Research Fellowship Opportunity**

*GPRL Livelihood Business Plans Case Study*

**Faculty Mentor:** Dean Karlan, Professor, Kellogg School of Management

**Project Synopsis:** The Graduation Program has strong evidence showing it increases consumption, assets, income, and revenue. However, more research is needed to understand the mechanisms through which a substantial boost in consumption and income helps lift the poor out of poverty traps (Banerjee et al. 2015). As a first step, understanding the minimum investments and expected returns of key livelihoods can help identify the thresholds that prevent the poor from escaping poverty. A complete picture of investments includes an assessment of incentives and profitability of setting up businesses individually or in a group.

To build future research on the Graduation model, Northwestern University's Global Poverty Research Lab (GPRL) is seeking undergraduate research fellows to conduct semi-structured one-on-one interviews to develop business plans that estimate basic investments and expected returns to common livelihoods and enterprises in Malawi and the Philippines. This opportunity is open to all undergraduate levels and will receive mentorship from Professor Dean Karlan.

**Project Term:** Summer and Academic Year 2026

**Project Location:** In person, off campus in Malawi, Philippines for 4 weeks, on campus for 2 weeks

**Job Description:** The students will conduct semi-structured one-on-one interviews with small enterprise owners to develop business plans that estimate basic investments and expected returns to common livelihoods and enterprises in Malawi and the Philippines. The students are expected to work closely with a local counterpart who will translate and also provide important in-country context. The students will be trained by a research team at the Global Poverty Research Lab along with close mentorship from Prof. Dean Karlan. The students will learn how to use an interview guide and how to probe during interviews. When in Malawi or the Philippines, the work will involve field visits to local markets and a few household interviews.

**Time Commitment:** 40 hours a week for at least 6 weeks

**Number of available positions:** Two

