Schooling without Learning?
Expansion of Basic Education in Africa

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Wednesday, November 3rd from 12:30-1:50pm CT
SSRB Tea Room/SSRB 201
and via Zoom: https://bit.ly/3AKqMlp

This talk takes as its starting point the vast expansion in basic education in Sub-Saharan Africa over the last three decades and the corresponding ‘crisis’ in learning. In the first part of the talk, I argue that concerns about the ‘learning crisis’ pay insufficient attention to social inequalities in learning. Drawing on standardized student assessments from 10 Francophone African countries, I show that learning outcomes among students at the end of primary school are both poor and highly stratified by socioeconomic status. I go on to explore how learning inequalities are produced, revisiting the influential Heyneman and Loxley hypothesis that schools are (much) more important than families in predicting learning outcomes in low-income contexts. In the second part of the talk, I explore the possibility that schools serve as important sites of social learning, even while formal learning assessments remain low. Drawing on data from 28 African countries, I explore whether changing patterns of educational access correspond with the diffusion of norms about women’s’ roles in intrafamilial decision-making.

In-person attendance is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Please email Meredith Clason if you would like to attend the talk in the Tea Room (SSRB 201). Once the available seats are taken, the event will be available only by Zoom.