Rob will present early findings from the ongoing Data for Ebola Recovery project. Beyond lives lost and livelihoods destroyed, the Ebola epidemic in West Africa has laid bare the deadly role that distrust of government can play in enabling a preventable epidemic to spiral out of control. In collaboration with the Liberian government and the MIT Governance Lab, Rob and colleagues surveyed more than 1,500 Monrovia residents to help to target Ebola recovery and response efforts and identify mechanisms that the government might use to regain citizens’ trust. Their results confirm that distrust had important implications for citizens’ actions during the crisis, including reducing compliance with preventative measures and government restrictions on movement. They also find, however, that neighborhood outreach efforts by the Ministry of Health were extremely effective in not only boosting compliance with public health measures but also restoring citizens’ trust.

Rob Blair is a PhD candidate in Political Science at Yale University and a Research Fellow at AidData. His research focuses on UN peacebuilding and post-conflict state consolidation. He has worked in various capacities for the UN Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions, the US Government’s Political Instability Task Force, Freedom House, and the Small Arms Survey. In the fall Rob will join the faculty of Brown University as an Assistant Professor of Political Science and International Studies.