

Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab to focus on the Middle East

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*J-PAL to focus on the Middle East-
Delegates at the conference*

Dubai, United Arab Emirates: The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) at MIT today announced it will be increasing its work and presence in the Middle East and North Africa as part of its commitment to helping improve lives and alleviate poverty in the region.

Hosting an event in Dubai co-organized by Community Jameel and attended by government officials, NGOs, and representatives from the private sector, J-PAL also announced new studies to support youth employment and private sector growth in the Middle East. This includes improving the effectiveness of job fairs and job training for young people in Egypt – a nation where one-sixth of the youth population is unemployed, and an additional third is not in education, employment or vocational training.

J-PAL conducts impact evaluations of programs and policies designed to tackle poverty. These evaluations seek to learn what works, what does not work, and why, on issues related to health, education, youth employment, and financial inclusion. J-PAL is already involved in projects and partnerships across the Middle East, including work in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar. These partnerships support the development of policy-driven research, the results of which could inform policymaking in Middle East and other regions facing similar challenges.

Speaking in Dubai, Abhijit Banerjee, Professor of Economics at MIT and Director of J-PAL, said: “Our plan is to focus on the Middle East and wider region and play a key role in improving lives and alleviating poverty. It was especially valuable to hear from thought leaders today about how evidence from the region can play a key role in addressing some of the major challenges it is facing. ”

Fady Mohammed Jameel, President of Community Jameel International, said: “The work of the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab at MIT touches on key issues such as youth employment, health, and education. So MIT increasing its focus on the Middle East and North Africa to help improve lives in the region is welcome news.”

Founded at MIT's Department of Economics in 2003, the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) has since grown to include more than 140 affiliated professors from more than forty universities across the world.

J-PAL works closely with governments, donors, and nonprofits to help design and evaluate innovative social programs, scale up the most cost-effective interventions, and build a culture of policymaking informed by evidence.

To date, J-PAL affiliated researchers have conducted more than 826 evaluations in 78 countries, and more than 300 million people have been reached by programs tested and found to be effective through J-PAL evaluations. The organization has been instrumental in increasing the number and quality of randomized evaluations on development interventions.

Dr. Adam Osman, and Assistant Professor of Economics at the University of Illinois in Urbana Champaign, and co-Chair of J-PAL's MENA Research and Policy Initiative said "I'm very excited about J-PAL's commitment to increasing its work in the region. The Middle East and North Africa is filled with opportunities that will allow us to improve our understanding of how to spur economic growth and alleviate poverty. There are many partners we are working with like the Sawiris Foundation and Egypt's Industrial Training Council who are excited to push forward the boundaries of knowledge together."

The projects in Egypt include: