![J-PAL — Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab]

# September 2019 Newsletter

September 1, 2019



## How can RCTs help us reduce conflict and violence?

In 2017, the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) challenged J-PAL and Innovations for Poverty Action to expand the evidence base on effective conflict and violence prevention programs. The result was two major research initiatives: the Crime and Violence Initiative and the Peace and Recovery Program, both of which aim to produce rigorous, generalizable insights into what drives crime, violence, and conflict and the levers to reduce each. We review some of these exciting new areas of research on the J-PAL blog. Read more »

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**Can we support SME growth by increasing demand for their products?**

In recent years, a growing number of randomized and quasi-experimental evaluations have taken creative approaches to studying the impacts of international trade policy. This body of research has made important contributions to our understanding of how best to help small and medium enterprises (SMEs) achieve sustainable growth. Read more »

# Amy Finkelstein on six lessons learned from the Health Care Delivery Initiative

Amy Finkelstein (MIT; Scientific Director, J-PAL North America) writes on the J-PAL blog, "Since HCDI's launch, the initiative has catalyzed many randomized evaluations in health care delivery—often cheaper, faster, and larger-scale than many thought possible. Now we're at an exciting point in our journey when we have new, high-quality evidence on formerly unanswered questions in US health care." Read Amy's reflections »

## FEATURED PUBLICATION

# Helping small businesses in Egypt engage with foreign markets

In Egypt, J-PAL affiliates David Atkin (MIT; Co-Chair, J-PAL Firms sector) and Adam Osman (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Co-Chair, J-PAL MENA Initiative), with co-author Amit Khandelwal, conducted a randomized evaluation with small-scale rug producers in Egypt to understand how exporting affects firms' profits and productivity.

They found that offering firms the opportunity to export rugs to high-income markets increased the firms' monthly profits by improving technical knowledge, efficiency, and the quality of their products. Read more »

## FEATURED AFFILIATED PROFESSOR

# Lawrence Katz on promoting economic mobility

Preliminary findings from a landmark housing and mobility study in Seattle suggest that helping low-income families overcome barriers to moving to higher-opportunity areas can promote economic mobility. We sat down with Lawrence Katz (Harvard; Scientific Director, J-PAL North America), one of the authors of the study, to better understand these important results and how they can inform US housing policy going forward. Read more »

## UPCOMING EVENTS

# September 19: Launching results of the Transparency for Development evaluation

J-PAL Southeast Asia, in collaboration with the Ash Center at Harvard Kennedy School, PATTIRO, and Results for Development, is hosting a half-day conference in Jakarta, Indonesia, to present the results of two randomized evaluations. The studies evaluated the impacts of a community-based transparency and accountability program designed to improve maternal and newborn health outcomes in Indonesia and Tanzania. Their findings highlight the importance of civic participation in improving service delivery. Learn more and register »

# September 26: "Thinking Globally to Mitigate Climate Change—Paying Local Communities to Protect Forests" with Seema Jayachandran

In the next event in our Data, Decisions, Public Policy lecture series, Seema Jayachandran will discuss approaches to mitigating climate change through reducing deforestation in low-income countries—without exacerbating poverty. She will discuss the findings from a randomized evaluation of a "payments for ecosystem services" program in Uganda, which quantified the amount of forest preserved, the resulting reduction in carbon emissions, and the cost-effectiveness of this approach for addressing climate change. Register now »

**UPCOMING COURSES**

# Register today: Political Economy and Economic Development

This new elective course in the online MicroMasters in Data, Economics, and Development Policy (DEDP), taught by Abhijit Banerjee (MIT; Director, J-PAL) and Benjamin A. Olken (MIT; Director, J-PAL), explores why and how political institutions affect economic development. The course applies key theories and empirical techniques to real-world examples ranging from voting and corruption to the role of the media. Learn more and register »

This semester of the MicroMasters in DEDP began September 3, but learners can still enroll. Register today »

# October 1: Measuring Health Outcomes in Field Surveys

This eight-week online course focuses on the fundamentals of field-based health research using case studies from India and Kenya combined with exercises that provide practical insights on general concepts like study design, measurement, and data collection. Learn more and register »

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## MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

A new hub for data in randomized evaluations
J-PAL Blog

Gujarat pilots emissions trading programme to tackle air pollution
Monga Bay

Parents know better than standardized tests
The Wall Street Journal

The myth of welfare dependency (Opinion)
Project Syndicate

Ed tech is big business, but does it really work?
BuiltIn

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## NEW RESEARCH PAPERS

Do Information Technologies Improve Teenagers' Sexual Education? Evidence from a Randomized Evaluation in Colombia
Alberto Chong, Marco Gonzalez-Navarro, Dean Karlan, Martín Valdivia

Moral Incentives in Credit Card Debt Repayment: Evidence from a Field Experiment
Leonardo Bursztyn, Stefano Fiorin, Daniel Gottlieb, Martin Kanz

Inputs, Incentives, and Complementarities in Education: Experimental Evidence from Tanzania
Isaac Mbiti, Karthik Muralidharan, Mauricio Romero, Youdi Schipper, Constantine Manda, Rakesh Rajani

An Experiment in Candidate Selection
Katherine Casey, Abou Bakarr Kamara, Niccoló Meriggi

Engaging Parents to Prevent Adolescent Substance Use: A Randomized Controlled Trial

Peter Bergman, Rebecca N. Dudovitz, Kulwant K. Dosanjh, Mitchell D. Wong

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## FEATURED JOBS

Policy Manager, J-PAL Africa (Cape Town, South Africa)

Research Associate, CREST (Paris, France)

Administrative Associate, J-PAL Global (Cambridge, MA, US)

IT Manager, J-PAL Global (Cambridge, MA, US)

Research, Education, and Training Associate, J-PAL Global (Cambridge, MA, US)

Senior Data Research Associate, J-PAL South Asia (Chennai, India)

Senior Project Associate, J-PAL South Asia (New Delhi, India)

Explore open positions around the world »

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The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) is a global research center working to reduce poverty by ensuring that policy is informed by scientific evidence. Anchored by a network of more than 180 affiliated professors at universities around the world, J-PAL draws on results from randomized impact evaluations to answer critical questions in the fight against poverty. We build partnerships with governments, NGOs, donors, and others to share this knowledge, scale up effective programs, and advance evidence-informed decision-making. J-PAL was launched at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 2003 and has regional centers in Africa, Europe, Latin America & the Caribbean, North America, South Asia, and Southeast Asia.