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Expanding social protection amid the COVID-19 crisis

The loss of income from lockdowns, business closures, and other responses to control the spread of COVID-19 threatens the survival of many low-income households and businesses. In a piece distributed by Project Syndicate, J-PAL Southeast Asia Scientific Directors [Rema Hanna](#) (Harvard) and [Benjamin A. Olken](#) (MIT; Director, J-PAL) discuss why expanding social protection programs should be a pillar of every country's response to COVID-19. They outline how existing research and past experience on targeted assistance and digital platforms can inform the design of programs that reach those most in need.

[Read more »](#)



Evidence from Indonesia: Designing effective social programs

Over the past two decades, Indonesia has gradually shifted its poverty alleviation strategy from subsidizing basic commodities, such as food and electricity, to targeted assistance programs. Staff from [J-PAL Southeast Asia](#) highlight several lessons from the global evidence base for tackling challenges to targeting, designing, and implementing these types of programs. [Read more »](#)



Toward evidence-informed climate policy: A reflection on Earth Day

COVID-19 has shown how our interconnectedness can create unprecedented threats that affect us all. Climate change is one such example that will disproportionately impact people living in poverty. To honor the 50th anniversary of Earth Day on April 22, staff from the [Environment, Energy, & Climate Change sector](#) shared how they've been thinking about the need for evidence-informed action at the nexus of climate change and poverty alleviation. [Read more »](#)

FEATURED EVALUATION



Leveraging insights from past health crises to strengthen responses to COVID-19

If people perceive the quality of health care to be low, they may be less likely to use health systems. J-PAL affiliated professor [Oeindrila Dube](#) (University of Chicago; Co-Chair, Crime, Violence, & Conflict sector) and co-authors tested the effect of two accountability tools on participants' trust in the health care system and health outcomes in Sierra Leone. They found these strategies increased reporting of cases and reduced mortality during the 2014-2015 Ebola outbreak. [Read the summary »](#)

In the [New York Times](#) and on [VoxEU Talks](#), the authors also discussed how these lessons can be applied to the COVID-19 response.

FEATURED POLICY INSIGHT

Teaching business skills to microentrepreneurs

Business skills training programs are common across the world, but do they actually help microentrepreneurs in low- and middle-income countries start and sustain a business? A review of 22



randomized evaluations shows that while being offered training improved business practices, it rarely increased profits. Alternative programs have shown promising results. [Read more »](#)

FEATURED MULTIMEDIA



Video: Scaling up individualized tutoring to improve learning in the United States

After partnering with J-PAL affiliated professors to evaluate their individualized math tutoring program, Saga Education [expanded its program](#) to reach over 2,500 students. Co-founder Antonio Gutierrez shares how understanding the impact of their program in Chicago helped secure buy-in from stakeholders to scale up the program and serve more students across the United States. [Watch now »](#)

FEATURED WEBINAR



Applying lessons from health evidence to design COVID-19 response programs

Existing health evidence on cash transfers, pricing, and trust in health systems could help governments improve adherence to guidelines for controlling the spread of COVID-19. In a recent webinar for the World Bank, J-PAL's Health sector Co-Chairs [Paschaline Dupas](#) (Stanford) and [Karen Macours](#) (Paris School of Economics) shared how lessons from past research can be incorporated into program design to improve adherence and service delivery. [Watch now »](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

June 1: Measuring women's agency,



empowerment, and norms in impact evaluations

What does it mean for women to have agency? Can women's empowerment be measured? How can we know if social norms have changed? Tune in on June 1 to hear J-PAL South Asia's Director of Policy, Training, and Communications, [Shagun Sabarwal](#), discuss strategies for measuring gender outcomes that often seem difficult to capture through quantitative and qualitative indicators. [Learn more and register »](#)

UPCOMING COURSES



Evaluating Social Programs: Online course and webinar series

We are excited to bring you two easy ways to access J-PAL's Evaluating Social Programs course from wherever you are.

J-PAL 101x, our online course, began on April 28, but it's not too late to enroll! This free, self-paced course features lectures from renowned MIT faculty and J-PAL affiliated professors on how to use randomized evaluations to rigorously measure the impact of social programs. [Learn more and register for J-PAL 101x »](#)

From June 8-12, we will also be offering a free, week-long webinar training series. The interactive sessions will combine lectures from J-PAL affiliated professors and senior J-PAL staff with breakout sessions on case studies. [Learn more and register for the webinar series »](#)



June 2: MicroMasters' summer semester begins

The next semester of our online [Master's in Data, Economics, and Development Policy \(DEDP\)](#) begins June 2. Through a series of five online courses and in-person exams, learners will gain a strong foundation in microeconomics, development economics, and probability and statistics, while engaging with cutting-edge field research. Students who complete the full

DEDP credential are eligible to apply for the Master's program in DEDP at MIT. [Learn more and register »](#)

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Coronavirus is a crisis for the developing world, but here's why it needn't be a catastrophe (Opinion)

The Guardian

Prejudices about online courses, but healthy to lose some of those: Abhijit Banerjee

The Indian Express

The cleanest Earth Day ever?

CEGA Blog

A healthy understanding

MIT Technology Review

How data governments already have can guide the pandemic response (Opinion)

Governing

NEW RESEARCH PAPERS

Experimental Evidence on the Economics of Rural Electrification

Kenneth Lee, Edward Miguel, Catherine Wolfram

Eliciting and Utilizing Willingness to Pay: Evidence from Field Trials in Northern Ghana

James Berry, Greg Fischer, Raymond Guiteras

Public Information is an Incentive for Politicians: Experimental Evidence from Delhi Elections

Abhijit Banerjee, Nils T. Enevoldsen, Rohini Pande, Michael Walton

Does EdTech Substitute for Traditional Learning? Experimental Evidence of the Educational Production Function

Eric Bettinger, Robert Fairlie, Anastasia Kapuza, Elena Kardanova, Prashant Loyalka, Andrey Zakharov

FEATURED JOBS

While we are not currently conducting in-person interviews, we are still hiring for a number of open positions.

Director of Research, Education, and Training, Cambridge, MA, US

Associate Director of Research and Training, Cambridge, MA, US

Development Coordinator, Cambridge, MA, US

Development Officer, Cambridge, MA, US

Policy Manager, New Delhi, India
Research Manager, New Delhi, India
Research Manager, Energy, Environment, and Climate Change, New Delhi, India
Training Manager, New Delhi, India

[Explore open positions around the world »](#)

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 190 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.



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