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NEWSLETTER

April 2022



Photo: Tale Tellers on behalf of J-PAL

Launching the Egypt Impact Lab: Evidence for poverty alleviation

Last month, J-PAL Middle East and North Africa launched the Egypt Impact Lab in collaboration with the Egyptian Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, with support from founding partners the Sawiris Foundation for Social Development and Community Jameel. The Lab aims to strengthen the effectiveness of Egypt's poverty alleviation policies by rigorously evaluating innovative government programs and using the results to inform scale-up decisions. This work will focus on top government priorities including reducing poverty in rural Egypt, improving the effectiveness of social protection

programs, promoting microenterprise development, and empowering women through access to economic opportunities and family planning.

[Read more](#)



Photo: Sudarshan Jha | Shutterstock.com

New partnership with the Veddiss Foundation to build a culture of evidence-informed policymaking in India

J-PAL South Asia recently launched the Alliance for Scaling Policy Impact through Research and Evidence (ASPIRE) in partnership with the Veddiss Foundation. A major boost for promoting data- and evidence-informed policymaking in India, ASPIRE brings together governments, donors, and nonprofits to develop, test, and scale innovative anti-poverty measures and make progress on some of India's most significant policy challenges. [Read more »](#)



Photo: Evan Williams | J-PAL

Welcoming a new cohort to the joint J-PAL/MIT Master's program

The 2022 student cohort of the [Data, Economics, and Development Policy](#) (DEDP) Master's program just passed the halfway mark of their semester at MIT. These 31 students from twenty countries arrived in January and are currently tackling midterm exams

and identifying projects for their summer capstone internship. Each student completed the online [MicroMasters](#) in DEDP prior to being accepted to the Master's program and will soon graduate with a Master of Applied Science from MIT in September.

[Read more »](#)

In a new blog post, Chuka Ezeoguine, a current DEDP Master's student, shares highlights from his internship at [J-PAL Africa](#) and experience pivoting to development economics from engineering. [Read more »](#)

EVIDENCE-INFORMED DECISION-MAKING



Photo: Shutterstock.com

Scaling up access to school information in the United States

High-quality schools are critical to children's short- and long-term success, yet low-income families may not have information about school quality in different neighborhoods. J-PAL affiliated professor [Peter Bergman](#) (UT Austin) and coauthors partnered with GreatSchools and AffordableHousing.com to study the impact of providing school quality information alongside housing listings for US Housing Choice Voucher recipients. After the randomized evaluation found that this information increased the number of families who moved to neighborhoods with higher-quality schools, AffordableHousing.com scaled up access to school quality information for its 60,000 daily users. [Read more »](#)

FEATURED EVALUATION SUMMARY



Photo: Idea Ink Design | Shutterstock.com

Increasing immunizations through a public health campaign in Indonesia

Celebrities are often invited to participate in information campaigns with the hope that they can leverage their large networks to inform a wide range of audiences. But can celebrity endorsements change people's opinions and behaviors? To answer this question, J-PAL affiliated professors [Arun Chandrasekhar](#) (Stanford), [Benjamin Olken](#) (MIT; Director, J-PAL; Scientific Director, J-PAL Southeast Asia; Co-Chair, J-PAL's Social Protection sector), and coauthors collaborated with the Indonesian Ministry of Health and the government's Special Ambassador to the United Nations for Millennium Development Goals to conduct a nationwide Twitter campaign to promote child immunization in Indonesia. [See the findings »](#)

FEATURED AFFILIATE



Photo: MIT

Tavneet Suri on the importance of locally-grounded research

In our newest Affiliate Spotlight, [Tavneet Suri](#) (MIT; Scientific Director, J-PAL Africa; Co-Chair, J-PAL's Agriculture sector) emphasizes the importance of research being grounded in ideas that arise from local communities and contexts. Tavneet discusses how she

has applied this to her own work building the [African Scholars Program](#) at J-PAL, and how she and her J-PAL colleagues had to think creatively about the program's structure. [Read more »](#)

WELCOMING OUR NEW AFFILIATED PROFESSORS

In summer 2021, 38 talented researchers joined the J-PAL network. We will feature a few of them here each month.



Horacio Larreguy
Instituto Tecnológico
Autónomo de México



Kate Orkin
University of Oxford



Yogita Shamdasani
National University of
Singapore

FEATURED MULTIMEDIA

Putting our economic assumptions to the test

Traditionally, economists develop theories to explain how the world works. On NPR's Hidden Brain podcast, [Abhijit Banerjee](#) (MIT; Director, J-PAL; Scientific Director, J-PAL Europe) shares his path to studying economic theories in real-world settings through randomized evaluations. [Listen »](#)

Strategies to empower women economically during Covid-19

In a recent Foreign Policy podcast marking International Women's Day, Melinda French Gates and [Esther Duflo](#) (MIT; Director, J-PAL; Scientific Director, J-PAL South Asia) discussed evidence from around the world on effective approaches to women's empowerment, including cash transfers, labor force participation, and changing gender norms. [Listen and read more »](#)

FEATURED EVENTS

[April 13] Evidence for Social Protection Policy: Introducing the Social Protection Initiative

J-PAL and Evidence for Policy Design recently established the [Social Protection Initiative](#) (SPI) to fund new policy-relevant research on social protection programs in low- and middle-income countries. This webinar will introduce the initiative and feature remarks from academic and policy experts on the importance of rigorous research, areas for future research, and SPI's goals as well as a panel discussion with policymakers who will share their experiences implementing social protection programs. [Register »](#)

[May 5] Gender Norms and Women's Work

Gender norms are important in determining women's labor market outcomes. While directly challenging and changing restrictive norms is an understudied area, emerging evidence from impact evaluations and other types of studies can provide useful insights for policymakers. J-PAL's [Gender and Economic Agency Initiative](#), in collaboration with the International Development Research Center's Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women - East Africa, will host a webinar to discuss policy-relevant research on gender norms and attitudes on women's paid and unpaid work. A panel of policymakers will share their experiences and insights on evidence-informed strategies to address restrictive norms around women's work. [Register »](#)

[Webinar recording] Environment, Energy, and Climate Action in India: Generating Evidence for Policy through Randomized Evaluations

J-PAL South Asia recently hosted a webinar on the need to implement real-world and evidence-informed climate change strategies to meet India's recently announced policy commitments. Panelists addressed questions that governments, nonprofits, researchers, and donors may encounter when designing climate action, energy, and environment programs for individuals experiencing poverty. [Watch the recording »](#)

FEATURED TRAININGS

[June 13–17] Evaluating Social Programs

How do you know if your organization's programs are achieving their intended impact? Apply for J-PAL's flagship [Evaluating Social Programs](#) course to learn why and when randomized evaluations can be used to rigorously measure social impact, and how findings can inform the design of evidence-informed policies and programs. J-PAL affiliated professors and staff will lead interactive lectures and small-group sessions to engage with these topics live over Zoom. Candidates are encouraged to apply at their earliest convenience as space is limited; applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis. [Upcoming dates](#) for additional Evaluating Social Programs courses in different time zones will be announced soon. [Learn more and apply by May 11 »](#)

[June 21–24] Evidence-Informed Policymaking in Germany and Beyond

In partnership with the Briq Institute, [J-PAL Europe](#) is hosting a four-day training event to discuss and learn about the use of evidence and rigorous impact evaluations in Germany and beyond. The event will commence with a forum in which speakers will share insights from their respective fields, and [Abhijit Banerjee](#) (MIT; Director, J-PAL; Scientific Director, J-PAL Europe) will deliver a keynote speech. Subsequently, interested participants can attend a version of J-PAL's Evaluation Social Programs course for a deeper dive into why and when randomized evaluations can be used to rigorously measure social impact and how findings can inform the design of evidence-informed policies and programs. [Learn more and apply by April 30 »](#)

[July 5–8] J-PAL Summer School: Development Methodologies

In partnership with the French Development Agency, the French Fund for Innovation in Development, and the Abidjan Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics, J-PAL is hosting a summer training course in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire for African researchers and policymakers with a demonstrated interest in impact evaluations and evidence-informed decision-making. [Learn more and apply by April 30 »](#)

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

[Joining forces to address gender-based violence in Peru](#)
J-PAL Blog

[How AI helped delivery cash aid to many of the poorest people in Togo](#)
Fast Company

[TN sets up permission matrix in data policy as national rulebook gets drafted](#)
Economic Times

[Dialogue with prof. Esther Duflo: Good economics for post pandemic era \[Video\]](#)

Caixin Global

Govt. study calls for an incentive programme for walking

The Hindu

NEW RESEARCH PAPERS

Screening and Signalling Non-Cognitive Skills: Experimental Evidence from Uganda

Vittorio Bassi, Aisha Nansamba

Instant Loans Can Lift Subjective Well-Being: A Randomized Evaluation of Digital Credit in Nigeria

Daniel Björkegreb, Joshua E. Blumenstock, Omowunmi Folajimi-Senjobi, Jacqueline Mauro, Suraj R. Nair

The Making of Civic Virtues: A School-Based Experiment in Three Countries

Simon Briole, Marc Gurgand, Éric Maurin, Sandra McNally, Jenifer Ruiz-Valenzuela, Daniel Santín

Justifying Dissent

Leonardo Bursztyn, Georgy Egorov, Ingar Haaland, Aakaash Rao, Christopher Roth

FEATURED JOBS

Research Associate, Johannesburg, South Africa

Senior Design and Communications Associate, Cairo, Egypt

Communications Manager (Creating Learning Opportunities for Public Officials), New Delhi, India

Research Associate (Rooftop Solar Project), Bengaluru, India

Business Analyst, Cambridge, MA, US

Salesforce Developer, Cambridge, MA, US

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