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J-PAL
ABDUL LATIF JAMEEL POVERTY ACTION LAB

NEWSLETTER
July 2023

Photos courtesy of MENA scholars

Welcoming our first cohort of the MENA Scholars Fellowship

J-PAL Middle East and North Africa (MENA) at The American University in Cairo welcomed the first cohort of the MENA Scholars Fellowship, with support from Community Jameel and Sawiris Foundation for Social Development. Following its launch in November 2022 to help early-career researchers build skills and experience designing and conducting randomized evaluations, the Fellowship received an overwhelming response with a highly competitive pool of applications from across the MENA region. After a rigorous selection process, six outstanding individuals have been chosen to join the program.

Meet the scholars

A new Public Policy Track in the DEDP MicroMasters

Photo credit: Lucy Nguyen, J-PAL

The DEDP MicroMasters Program launched a new Public Policy Track, along with a new Microeconomic Theory and Public Policy course, designed for learners seeking to contribute to pressing policy challenges in higher-income countries, complementing its curriculum focusing on low- and middle-income countries. The program also updated its name to "Data, Economics, and the Design of Policy" to reflect this diverse portfolio of courses. Learn more and enroll for the fall »

📣 New research resource: A practical toolkit for health care evaluation

Photo credit: Shutterstock.com

J-PAL North America's new Health Care Evaluation Toolkit provides practical guidance and real-world case studies for social scientists conducting randomized evaluations of health care delivery interventions, running studies within health systems, and using health data in the United States. The toolkit includes five in-depth resources to strengthen the quality and rigor of randomized evaluations in the health care field, covering topics such as publishing in medical journals and navigating hospital IRBs. Read more »

Lessons on improving mental health in low- and middle-income contexts

Photo credit: UN Women/Allison Joyce, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Progress in improving mental health worldwide lags behind other areas of health, and there is limited evidence on how to close this gap in low- and middle-income settings. In a new blog post, Linxi Wang (DEDP 2022 graduate intern and DIME Data Scientist Consultant) and J-PAL affiliated professor Frank

Schilbach (MIT) explore existing evidence from randomized evaluations on interventions that seek to improve poor mental health and address the underlying drivers of mental illness, including psychosocial approaches and leveraging economic programs. Read more »

FEATURED AFFILIATED PROFESSOR

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We are responsible for guaranteeing that people will fulfill their purpose in life, and at the same time that they are responsible citizens in a changing world with many uncertainties."

Raquel Bernal on early childhood education and the importance of lifelong learning

J-PAL affiliated professor Raquel Bernal (Universidad de los Andes) shares reflections from her many years researching education and early childhood development in Latin America. Now, as president of Universidad de los Andes, she aims to equip young people with the education and skills they need to confront global challenges, from technological advances to geopolitical conflicts. Read more »
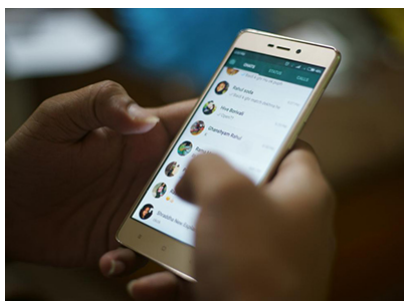

FEATURED EVALUATION SUMMARY

Countering health misinformation in Zimbabwe

Social media platforms are common sources of information in low- and middle-income countries but can be prone to spreading misinformation. J-PAL affiliated professor Horacio Larreguy (Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México) and coauthors

Photo credit: Rahul Ramachandram, Shutterstock.com

Jeremy Bowles and Shelley Liu collaborated with the organizations Internews and Kubatana to circulate factual messages in Zimbabwe about Covid-19 transmission rates, prevention measures, and dispelling common misconceptions about cures. The study found that the messages countered misinformation and reduced potentially harmful behavior. Read more »

WELCOMING OUR NEW AFFILIATED PROFESSORS

In summer 2022, 33 talented researchers joined the J-PAL network. We will feature a few of them here each month.

Timothy Layton
Harvard Medical School

Juliana Londoño-Vélez
UC Los Angeles

Ariel Zucker
UC Santa Cruz

FEATURED EVENTS

[July 21] A New Partnership to Expand the Culture of Evidence Use in Central America

J-PAL Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) and Universidad del Valle de Guatemala (UVG) will host an event to launch their new partnership to promote the generation and use of evidence to design public policies and social programs in Guatemala. Roberto Moreno (Rector, UVG), Paula Pedro (Executive Director, J-PAL LAC), and key members of both institutions will participate in panels and discussions about the future of evidence use across Central America. Read more about this collaboration and register for the event »

[Event recap] Understanding the Hidden Factors Influencing Child Marriage in Indonesia

In March 2023, J-PAL Southeast Asia organized a public event to share evidence on the impact of information campaigns on perceptions and attitudes towards child marriage in Indonesia. The evaluation findings suggested that viewing a short movie had an impact on overall perceptions, perceived risk, and the benefits of delaying child marriage. During the event, insights from J-PAL affiliated researchers and participants highlighted underlying factors contributing to child marriage, such as limited avenues for children to express opinions, the need to support children in understanding their choices, and the importance of further research regarding decision-making responsibilities for children.

Read about the event »

UPCOMING TRAINING

[Due August 4] Apply for the Displaced Livelihoods Initiative's Research Incubator

J-PAL and Innovations for Poverty Action's Displaced Livelihoods Initiative (DLI) will host a three-day randomized evaluation design workshop at the Paris School of Economics October 17–19. The research incubator is designed for organizations promoting sustainable livelihoods for displaced persons and host communities. The incubator will help participants develop a concept note for a randomized evaluation of one of their own programs and establish the foundations for collaboration with researchers applying for impact evaluation funding through DLI. Applications are due August 4. Learn more and apply »

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

How to revitalize summers for teens and young adults [Opinion]
The Washington Post

Esther Duflo: Development in the 21st century [Podcast]
PSE-CEPR Policy Forum

Summer school project sets foot in Morocco to provide quality education
Morocco World News

Finding the indiscernible poor: Community knowledge as a targeting approach
Ideas for India

VVOB unpacks new teaching model after successful three-year pilot
PML Daily

Quelling youth violence through cognitive behavioural therapy: A beacon of hope for

Western Cape
Daily Maverick

NEW RESEARCH PAPERS

Do Celebrity Endorsements Matter? A Twitter Experiment Promoting Vaccination in Indonesia
Vivi Alatas, Arun G. Chandrasekhar, Markus Mobius, Benjamin A. Olken, and Cindy Paladines

Does Combating Corruption Reduce Clientelism?
Gustavo J. Bobonis, Paul J. Gertler, Marco Gonzalez-Navarro, and Simeon Nichter

Informing Mothers about the Benefits of Conversing with Infants: Experimental Evidence from Ghana
Pascaline Dupas, Camille Falezan, Seema Jayachandran, and Mark Walsh

The Impact of Large-Scale Social Media Advertising Campaigns on COVID-19 Vaccination: Evidence from Two Randomized Controlled Trials
Lisa Ho, Emily Breza, Abhijit Banerjee, Arun G. Chandrasekhar, Fatima C. Stanford, Renato Fior, Paul Goldsmith-Pinkham, Kelly Holland, Emily Hoppe, Louis-Maël Jean, Lucy Ogbu-Nwobodo, Benjamin A. Olken, Carlos Torres, Pierre-Luc Vautrey, Erica Warner, Esther Duflo, and Marcella Alsan

Effects of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Cash Transfers on Older Persons Living Alone in India
Madeline McKelway, Abhijit Banerjee, Erin Grela, Frank Schilbach, Miriam Sequeira, Garima Sharma, Girija Vaidyanathan, and Esther Duflo

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FEATURED JOBS

Project Director (Digital Identification and Finance Initiative), Nairobi, Kenya
Research Assistant, Mannheim or Frankfurt, Germany
Senior Research Associate, Santiago, Chile
Manager (Capacity Building), New Cairo, Egypt
Senior Officer, Finance and Operations, New Cairo, Egypt
Communications Associate (Events), New Delhi, India
Research Associate (Digital Literacy in India Project), Ludhiana, Punjab, India
Policy Manager, Cambridge, MA, US
Undergraduate Policy and Communications Intern (Fall 2023), Cambridge, MA, US

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