
June 2025 Newsletter: Latest from The Evidence Effect, celebrating 5 years of J-PAL MENA, and helping students learn in Uganda

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NEWSLETTER

June 2025



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The Evidence Effect: How LMIC governments create lasting change

Most low- and middle-income country (LMIC) governments invest far more in their own social programs than all foreign aid combined. While foreign assistance has been in the spotlight this year, LMIC governments have the mandate and reach to make change stick. Our partners have shown that the path to sustainable development and poverty alleviation runs through innovative and effective governments—and now more than ever, we should be learning from their efforts.

In the third installment of The Evidence Effect, Lina Marliani, executive director of **J-PAL Southeast Asia**, and Paula Pedro, executive director of **J-PAL Latin America and the**

[Caribbean](#), share how partners can learn from and support government-led innovations to spur lasting change.

[Read the new blog post](#)

[Explore The Evidence Effect](#)

ICYMI: Read the first two installments of The Evidence Effect

700 million people live in extreme poverty. Clean water, basic health care, and stable employment remain out of reach for many. Budgets are tight and foreign assistance is being cut, raising urgent questions about the future. Data and evidence can help prioritize programs that truly make a difference.

Our new Evidence Effect web page and accompanying blog series share ideas to help shape the future of development. The first blog post in the series outlines concrete ways that development spending can save lives and help people lift themselves out of extreme poverty. The second installment makes the case that funding and scaling decisions should be driven more by evidence of impact and cost-effectiveness. [Read the blog series »](#)



J-PAL affiliated professors David Atkin (MIT), Amit Khandelwal (Yale University), and Adam Osman (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) conducted a randomized evaluation with small rug producers in Egypt to examine how exporting affects firms' profits and productivity. Photo credit: Haitham Famy, J-PAL

Celebrating five years of J-PAL MENA

 **July 7**

This year marks half a decade of [J-PAL Middle East and North Africa \(MENA\)](#)'s work to advance evidence-informed policymaking in the region. During that time, J-PAL MENA has supported the implementation of rigorous evaluations, co-created embedded labs with governments in [Egypt](#) and [Morocco](#), launched the [MENA Scholars Fellowship](#) to mentor and support early-career researchers, and built policy and training partnerships.

To commemorate this five-year milestone, J-PAL MENA is hosting a celebratory event at The American University in Cairo with Community Jameel that will bring together researchers and government partners, including members of the Egyptian Cabinet, to reflect on shared achievements and look to the future. The event will feature keynote remarks from [Abhijit Banerjee](#) (MIT; Director, J-PAL; Scientific Director, J-PAL Europe). [Learn more and register to watch the live stream »](#)

FEATURED EVALUATION SUMMARY



Photo credit: Kimanya-Ngeyo Foundation for Science and Education

Helping teachers boost student learning through curiosity and discovery

Uganda

Policy issue: Teaching practices based on rote learning can contribute to learning gaps among students, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. While many governments spend significant resources on teacher training to improve student learning, there is limited evidence on alternative teaching practices.

Evaluation: Researchers partnered with Ugandan NGO Kimanya Ngeyo Foundation for Science and Education to test the impact of Preparation for Social Action (PSA), a program that helps teachers facilitate student discovery and curiosity, on teacher motivation and

student learning outcomes.

Results: In schools where PSA was offered, researchers found positive impacts on multiple dimensions of teacher pedagogy, classroom dynamics, creativity, and student learning, which was supported by a sustained increase in student test scores after four years. Informed by the results of this evaluation, researchers are partnering with the government to [adapt](#) and [scale](#) the PSA approach in Uganda.

[Read more](#)

Research by: [Nava Ashraf](#) (London School of Economics), [Abhijit Banerjee](#) (MIT), and [Vesall Nourani](#) (Harvard University)

FEATURED RESEARCHER



We see strong potential for replicating this model in other settings, with appropriate adaptations to both content and delivery.”



Affiliate Spotlight: Q&A with Selim Gulesci on reducing gender-based violence in schools

Mozambique

In a recent study coauthored by J-PAL affiliated professor [Selim Gulesci](#) (Trinity College Dublin), researchers evaluated a Mozambican public school program that trained teachers and supported students to better recognize, respond to, and report gender-based violence. In a new Affiliate Spotlight, Selim responds to readers’ questions about the evaluation, sharing reflections on the research findings, implementation considerations, and opportunities for adaptation in other contexts. [Read the Q&A »](#)

Research by: Sofia Amaral (World Bank), Aixa Garcia-Ramos (University of Passau), [Selim Gulesci](#) (Trinity College Dublin), and Sarita Ore-Quispe (Columbia University)

WELCOMING OUR NEW AFFILIATED PROFESSORS

In summer 2024, we welcomed 35 talented researchers to the J-PAL network. We will feature a few of them here each month.



Sabrin Beg
University of Delaware



Max Kapustin
Cornell University

FEATURED EVENTS

AI for Good? Evaluating the Impact of AI in Development

 **June 12**

Organizations looking to use AI for development are concerned about the potential for errors and biases when using AI in high-stakes situations. In this upcoming VoxDev webinar, Farhan Abrol (Technical Product Advisor, The Agency Fund), [Samantha Carter](#) (Senior AI Policy Manager, J-PAL), and Han Sheng Chia (Policy Fellow, Center for Global Development) will discuss their [four-level approach](#) to evaluating the potential applications of AI. [Register now »](#)

Evidence-Based Policymaking in Climate, Health, and Innovation in Europe

 **June 19**

Ensuring that public policy design and spending are effective is more important than ever. This online event hosted by d\carb Future Economy Forum, with support from the Centre

for Sustainability and the Berlin School of Economics, will convene expert perspectives including several professors in the J-PAL network, and feature a panel discussion moderated by [Michael Braun](#) (Policy Manager, J-PAL Europe) to chart a path towards evidence-informed policymaking in climate, science, and healthcare across Germany and Europe. [Register now »](#)

Watch: Inaugural session of the Bridging Health Systems Knowledge Exchange

Universal health coverage (UHC) reforms are a policy priority in Egypt. In April, the [Egypt Impact Lab](#) at [J-PAL Middle East and North Africa](#), in collaboration with the Universal Health Insurance Authority (UHC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) in Egypt, launched a new knowledge exchange webinar series to foster cross-country knowledge sharing and strengthen the role of evidence in driving health reforms.

In the inaugural webinar, Egyptian and Chilean policymakers, researchers, and technical experts shared lessons on designing benefits packages. They featured learnings from their practical experiences in Chile's pioneering health reforms, Egypt's ongoing UHC journey, and international insights from WHO. [Watch the webinar recording »](#)

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

[Eyes on delivery – improving implementation for effective social protection for all \[Lecture\]](#)
UNU WIDER

[Seeing the invisible: Responses to indoor air pollution, with Robert D. Metcalfe \[Podcast\]](#)
Resources Radio

[Six questions with Kelsey Jack](#)
World Bank Blogs

NEW RESEARCH PAPERS

[Finding Talent in the Age of AI](#)
Kobbina Awuah, Urša Krenk, and David Yanagizawa-Drott

[Second Generation Effects of an Experimental Conditional Cash Transfer Program on Early Childhood Human Capital in Nicaragua](#)
Tania Barham, Oscar M. Díaz-Botía, Karen Macours, John A. Maluccio, and Julieta Vera

Rueda

Who You Gonna Call? Gender Inequality in External Demands for Parental Involvement

Kristy Buzard, Laura Gee, and Olga Stoddard

A Tailored Small Group Instruction Intervention in Mathematics Benefits Low Achievers

Michael Rosholm, Pia Beck Tonnesen, Klaus Rasmussen, Steffen Overgaard, Julie Vangsøe Færch, Signe Gottschau Malm, and Jimmy Harder

FEATURED JOBS

Policy and Research Manager, Barcelona or Madrid, Spain

Research Associate (Microfinance), Santiago, Chile (remote)

Research Associate (Boosting Immunization Demand), Pune, Maharashtra, India

Research Associate (Remote Tutoring), Bangalore, Karnataka, India

Policy Manager to the Global Executive Director, Cambridge, MA, US

Senior Human Resources Associate, Cambridge, MA, US

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