
May 2025 Newsletter: Launching the Evidence Effect, supporting worker well-being on the job, and improving access to toilets

7 messages

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NEWSLETTER

May 2025



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The Evidence Effect

Big challenges need bold, effective solutions. That's why J-PAL is launching The Evidence Effect: a campaign to cut through the noise and spotlight what works in the fight against poverty.

Starting today, we're sharing lessons from the many evidence-backed programs and policies that can save lives, reduce poverty, and stretch every dollar further. Our hope is that these lessons and examples, taken from over twenty years of rigorous research and real-world experience, will help shape the conversation on the future of development. We hope you'll join the conversation too.

[Read our first installment](#)

[Explore The Evidence Effect](#)

NEW POLICY INSIGHTS



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Improving worker well-being with on-the-job support

In a new Policy Insight, J-PAL's [Firms](#) sector summarizes evidence from 21 rigorous evaluations to understand how workplace initiatives can create safer, healthier, and more productive workplaces.

Policy Issue: Nearly three million workers die globally from work-related diseases and

accidents each year. Workers in many regions face low wages, limited career advancement, and gender-based bias and harassment.

Results: Workplace policies like better safety measures, empowering workers to share feedback, and skill training improved workers' health and job satisfaction. These measures often led to higher productivity and lower turnover, sometimes benefiting firms with greater returns. However, evidence linking increased productivity to higher pay for workers remains weak, suggesting that while such policies can boost firm performance, ensuring that workers share in these gains is an unsolved challenge. [Read the Policy Insight »](#)

Preventing disease by improving access to toilets

In a new Policy Insight, J-PAL's [Health](#) sector reviews 27 randomized evaluations across fourteen countries of programs that used information campaigns, subsidies, and loans to improve sanitation.

Policy issue: Defecation in the open or in unsanitary facilities spreads disease, contaminates water, and poses serious risks to public health. However, hundreds of millions of people face barriers to accessing and using improved toilets.

Results: Programs that informed communities about how open defecation can harm their health or lowered the costs of building toilets improved people's access to and use of toilets. Even with these improvements, programs fell short of ensuring that everyone had access to toilets and had limited impacts on people's health. Still, these programs can help reduce open defecation while governments pursue more comprehensive piped sanitation systems, which have greater potential to minimize disease. [Read the Policy Insight »](#)

Listen to [Karen Macours](#) (Paris School of Economics; Co-Chair, J-PAL's Health sector) discuss the Policy Insight on [VoxDev's podcast »](#)

NEW PUBLICATION



Photo credit: Nadia Setiabudi, J-PAL

Changing perceptions of child marriage through edutainment

📍 Indonesia

Policy issue: Despite improvements in girls' education and socioeconomic conditions, child marriage persists in many low- and middle-income countries, with approximately 12 million girls married before the age of eighteen each year.

Evaluation: Researchers evaluated the impact of short “edutainment” (educational entertainment) films—focused on the costs of child marriage and the benefits of delaying it—on adolescent girls’ and their parents’ perceptions about child marriage.

Results: The study found that the short films, both with and without alternative religious perspectives, led girls and their parents to have more negative views about child marriage.

[Read more](#)

Research by: Milda Irhamni (Universitas Indonesia) and Gumilang Aryo Sahadewo (Universitas Gadjah Mada)

FEATURED BLOGS



Photo credit: Kwame Amo, Shutterstock.com

An AI evaluation framework for development

In the first post of a new blog series on how to evaluate the social impacts of artificial intelligence systems, [Sam Carter](#) (Senior AI Policy Manager, J-PAL Global) and coauthors from the Agency Fund and the Center for Global Development introduce a four-level evaluation framework for funders and implementers.

The series will walk through key questions for holistically evaluating AI systems—from whether the AI behaves as intended to whether it's improving lives—and explore how randomized evaluations can rigorously measure AI systems' impact on development. [Read the first blog in the series »](#)

Improving early childhood development in Guatemala

J-PAL Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) partners with governments across the region to strengthen public policy through training, research, and system support. The most recent post in a [LAC partnership blog series](#) highlights the office's collaboration with the Guatemalan Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Development, and the Secretariat for Food and Nutritional Security to improve early childhood development, nutrition, and social programs reaching over 50,000 families. [Read more »](#)

Where evidence meets practice: Improving children's foundational literacy and numeracy

How can schools adopt evidence-informed programs to help children master basic reading and math? The Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) Academy 3.0, a collaboration between UNICEF and J-PAL, brings together researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to answer that question. A new blog post by [Nicah Santos](#) (Senior Policy Associate, J-PAL Global) shares highlights from the FLN Academy 3.0 launch and insights from the Gates Foundation, Pratham, UNICEF, the World Bank, and others on [Teaching at the Right Level](#) and structured pedagogy. [Read more »](#)

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.



Samuel Bazzi
University of California,
San Diego



Susan W. Parker
University of Maryland



Saravana Ravindran
National University of
Singapore

FEATURED MULTIMEDIA

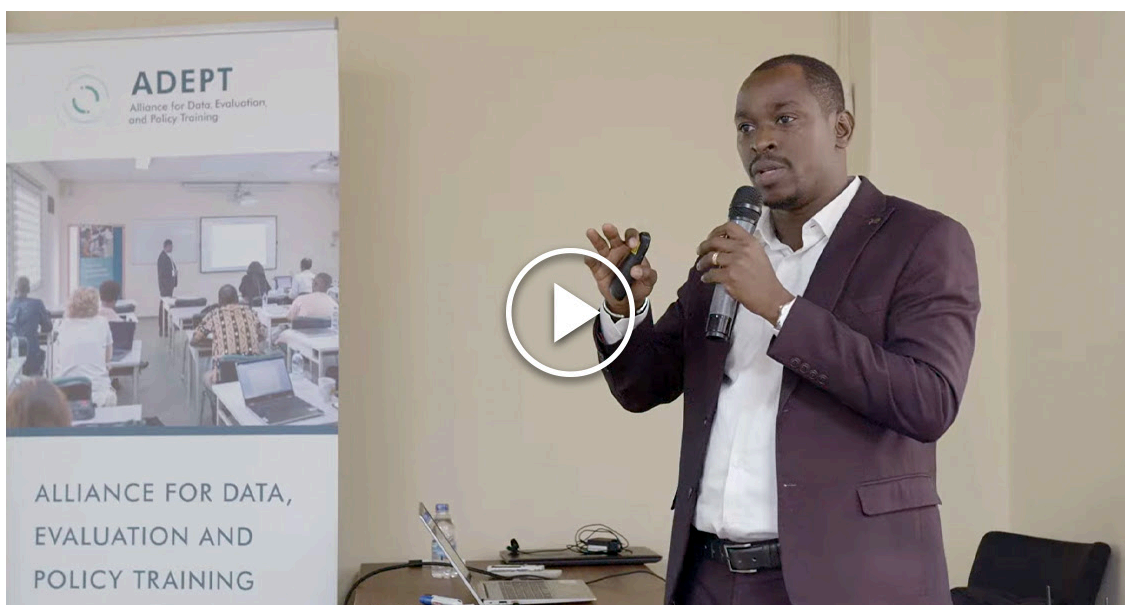


Photo credits: J-PAL

[WATCH] ADEPT partner spotlight: Civil servant training in Cote d'Ivoire

The [Alliance for Data, Evaluation, and Policy Training](#) (ADEPT), convened by J-PAL and Community Jameel, brings together universities, governments, and other partners to cultivate a network of evidence-informed policy professionals to drive change globally. We do this by creating innovative learning pathways and developing new academic programs. In a new video, learn about one of the first training programs offered through ADEPT, co-designed by [J-PAL Europe](#) and Côte d'Ivoire's National School of Statistics and Applied Economics, ENSEA, for Ivorian civil servants. [Watch the video »](#)

FEATURED EVENTS

Tomorrow: Europe policy roundtable on shaping climate action

 **May 14**

Join the IZA Institute of Labor Economics, [J-PAL Europe](#), and J-PAL's [King Climate Action Initiative](#) for a policy roundtable on how governments, funders, and implementers can use rigorous evidence to shape and carry out effective climate policies. The discussion will explore how researchers can collaborate with other stakeholders to meet urgent climate challenges. The event will feature a case study of J-PAL's [Air and Water Labs](#), which, in partnership with Community Jameel, work closely with governments to co-generate evidence-informed solutions in Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, and South Asia. Attendees are welcome to join online or in person in Bonn, Germany. [Learn more and register »](#)

Webinar: Scaling Life Skills Programs for Girls' Empowerment

 **May 22**

Join [J-PAL Africa](#) and partners from across Africa for a webinar on how to design and scale [life skills](#) programs that support girls in making informed decisions and expanding their opportunities. Implementers, funders, and government partners will discuss what it takes to adapt and sustain these programs at scale. The webinar will be in English with translation captioning available in French. [Learn more and register »](#)

Join J-PAL LAC's virtual events at gLocal Evaluation Week

J-PAL Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) is joining the 2025 gLocal Evaluation Week, an annual webinar series connecting groups across the globe to share lessons for evidence-informed policymaking. J-PAL LAC will host two webinars in Spanish:

June 3

Use of Data and Rigorous Evidence in Security and Crime Prevention Policies: Evidence from Chile and Mexico. [Learn more and register »](#)

June 4

Lessons Learned from J-PAL LAC to Strengthen Monitoring and Evaluation Systems in Mexico. [Learn more and register »](#)

Watch now: Building Evidence Ecosystems for Employment and Education

Cairo, Egypt

How can we equip policymakers and practitioners to scale job and education programs that work? A three-day learning event—co-hosted by the [Egypt Impact Lab](#) at J-PAL Middle East and North Africa and the European Training Foundation—brought together policy leaders and technical experts to share evidence, build evaluation skills, and foster cross-country learning. The event featured insights from ILO, GIZ, RAND Europe, Swedish Public Employment Service, UNICEF Egypt, and the World Association of Public Employment Services.

The event was the first in a series sharing tools and best practices for evidence-informed policymaking with policymakers and practitioners. [Watch the first panel »](#)

FEATURED TRAININGS

Ready to upskill this summer? Enroll in DEDP MicroMasters courses

 Term starts May 13

The [Data, Economics, and Design of Policy MicroMasters Program](#) offers online, graduate-level courses taught by MIT economics faculty, including J-PAL Directors [Abhijit Banerjee](#) (MIT; Director, J-PAL; Scientific Director, J-PAL Europe), [Esther Duflo](#) (MIT; Director, J-PAL; Scientific Director, J-PAL South Asia), and [Ben Olken](#) (MIT; Scientific Director, J-PAL South East Asia; Co-Chair, J-PAL's Social Protection sector). Courses are free to audit, with the option to pay to take the proctored exam and earn a course certificate. Those who complete the program credential can apply for an accelerated master's program at MIT or one of the pathway universities. Summer courses kick off today, and enrollment closes on **June 10**. Enroll soon to [start on weekly assignments](#) »

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Indian industries trade polluted air with each other in health fix
Context

Tripura leads education reform with Saharsh Utsav, pioneering emotional learning
India Today

How to direct workforce dollars where they'll pay off most [Opinion]
Governing

World's first particulate matter trading scheme in Gujarat cut pollution by up to 30%
The Indian Express

NEW RESEARCH PAPERS

Reducing Emissions and Air Pollution from Informal Brick Kilns: Evidence from Bangladesh

Nina Brooks, Debashish Biswas, Sameer Maithel, Grant Miller, Aprajit Mahajan, M. Rofi Uddin, Shoeb Ahmed, Moogdho Mahzab, Mahbubur Rahman, and Stephen P. Luby

Take-Up of Social Benefits: Experimental Evidence from France

Laura Castell, Marc Gurgand, Clément Imbert, and Todor Tochev

Women's Mobility and Labor Supply: Experimental Evidence from Pakistan

Robert Garlick, Erica Field, and Kate Vyborny

Can Pollution Markets Work in Developing Countries? Experimental Evidence from India

Michael Greenstone, Rohini Pande, Nicholas Ryan, and Anant Sudarshan

The Power of Persuasion: Causal Effects of Household Communication on Women's Employment

Namrata Kala and Madeline McKelway

FEATURED JOBS

Associate Director of HR, Finance, and Operations, Cape Town, South Africa

Data Scientist (Water, Air, and Energy Lab), Cape Town, South Africa

Policy Manager (Firms), Accra, Ghana or Nairobi, Kenya

Research Consultant (Reducing Emissions and Air Pollution from Traditional Brick Kilns), New Delhi, Delhi, India

Senior Research Associate (Scaling Every Child Counts in India), Vijayawada/Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India

Senior HR Associate, Cambridge, MA, US

Coming soon!

Executive Director (J-PAL Africa), Cape Town, South Africa

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

Explore a full list of open positions around the world, and continue checking our Careers page for upcoming positions.