



J-PAL Directors Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo, Lemann Foundation Founder and Board Chairman Jorge Paulo Lemann, Lemann Foundation Board Member Susanna Lemann, J-PAL LAC Scientific Director Jeanne Lafortune, J-PAL LAC Executive Director Paula Pedro, J-PAL LAC Scientific Director Cristine Pinto, and J-PAL LAC Deputy Executive Director Claudia Macías at the Lemann Collaborative launch in São Paulo, Brazil. Photo credit: Lemann Foundation

Launching the Lemann Collaborative: A partnership to connect research and policy

Brazil

J-PAL Co-Founders and Nobel Laureates [Abhijit Banerjee](#) and [Esther Duflo](#) joined researchers, philanthropic leaders, and public officials in Brazil last month to launch the **Lemann Collaborative**—a global initiative for excellence in public policy, created by the University of Zurich and Lemann Foundation, that will work closely with J-PAL.

The collaboration will be led by Abhijit and Esther and will focus on producing applied research, using evidence to improve public policy, and training leaders to connect research to implementation in Brazil, as well as expanding J-PAL's Alliance for Data, Evaluation and Policy Training (ADEPT) initiative. [Learn more about ADEPT »](#)






Out now! A new handbook for evidence on social protection

Cash transfers, public works, health insurance: Millions of people around the world rely on social protection programs like these to make ends meet, stay healthy, and protect their families from sudden hardship. Until recently, most of what we knew about these programs came from high-income settings, but those lessons don't map neatly onto low- and middle-income country (LMIC) contexts.

In *The Handbook of Social Protection*, J-PAL Social Protection Co-Chairs [Rema Hanna](#) (Harvard University) and [Ben Olken](#) (MIT) bring together leading voices in the field, including dozens of researchers in the J-PAL network, to take stock of what this fast-growing body of evidence tells us about how these programs work in LMICs and lay out the frontier for future research. [Explore the Handbook »](#)

New blog series: The future of finance in Africa

Across Africa, many entrepreneurs, farmers, and investors can't access the financial tools they need to grow their businesses. What will it take to change that? Our new blog series draws on discussions from a convening in Nairobi—bringing together researchers, banks, lending groups, and investors—to explore this question in five priority areas for inclusive finance in Africa:

-  [How data and AI are reshaping access to finance](#)
-  [Building venture markets where none exist](#)
-  [Why backing the right people matters for entrepreneurs](#)
-  [How currency risk limits access to affordable international finance](#)
-  [Why farmers and traders still struggle to move goods from farm to market](#)

[Read more from experts in the field »](#)

NEW POLICY INSIGHT



Photo credit: Shutterstock

Can paying people to protect nature help fight climate change?

A new J-PAL Policy Insight draws on six randomized evaluations and five quasi-experimental studies to explore how an approach known as payments for ecosystem services (PES) can protect nature, reduce carbon emissions, and decrease local pollution at a low cost.

Policy issue: Protecting forests and natural ecosystems is critical for fighting climate change. Yet over 1.6 billion people depend on forests for their livelihoods through small-scale farming, timber harvesting, and charcoal production. Fines and enforcement efforts alone can't stop environmental harm without threatening these livelihoods.

Intervention: PES offers a different approach: conditional cash transfers to compensate people for protecting nature. Hundreds of these programs now operate worldwide. But do they work? And how can policymakers make them better?

Findings: PES can reduce deforestation and crop burning, and increase tree planting. These programs can reduce emissions and pollution at a lower cost than other climate strategies like electric vehicle subsidies. But design matters. PES are most effective and cost-effective when they are carefully designed to:

- (1) Focus on people in high-risk areas who are likely to clear land;
- (2) Time payments strategically, whether through upfront payments to build trust or follow-up payments tied to verified conservation outcomes; and
- (3) Require participants to enroll all their land, preventing them from shifting deforestation elsewhere.

The insight also covers the potential trade-offs policymakers face between using PES for greater poverty reduction versus environmental protection.

[Read more](#)

FEATURED BLOGS



WFP Director of Evaluation Anne-Claire Luzot, J-PAL Co-Founder and Nobel Laureate in economics Abhijit Banerjee, and WFP Assistant Executive Director for Partnerships and Resource Mobilization Rania Dagash-Kamara at the Global Impact Evaluation Forum 2025. Photo credit: WFP

WFP and J-PAL commit to generating more evidence in humanitarian settings

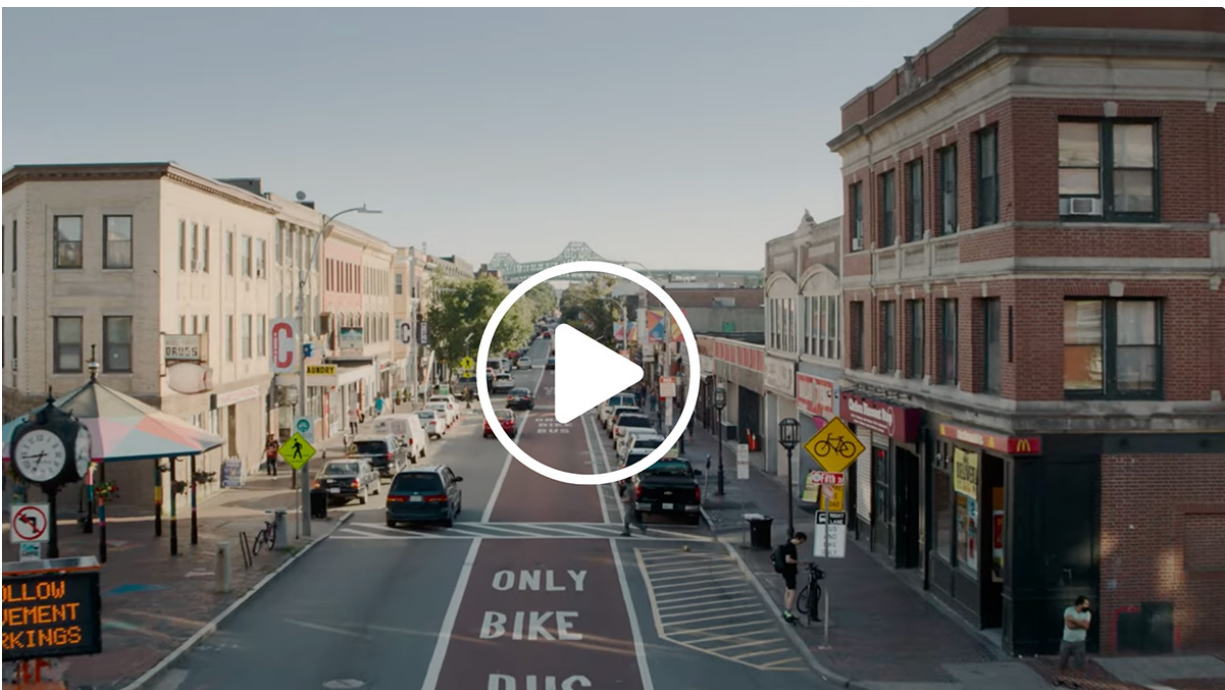
While running rigorous studies in conflict zones and disaster settings is hard, efforts like J-PAL's [Crime and Violence](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#), and [Displaced Livelihoods](#) initiatives and UN World Food Programme's (WFP) humanitarian workstream demonstrate that it can be done. As global crises intensify and resources shrink, partnerships between organizations like J-PAL and WFP are essential to build long-term portfolios of evidence and identify cost-effective ways to better serve communities facing disaster. [Read more »](#)

Bridging disciplines to shape sustainable rural futures in Africa

Rural communities across Africa face deeply connected challenges, from climate change to declining soil health to low agricultural productivity. Solving them requires researchers who can work across disciplines and ground their methods in local realities.

To bridge the divide between statistical rigor and contextual understanding, J-PAL's [UM6P-J-PAL Applied Lab for Agriculture](#) (UJALA) led a week-long doctoral training program that centered academic learning, workshops, and networking around rural development challenges in Africa. [Read the takeaways »](#)

FEATURED MULTIMEDIA



Cash for food: How Chelsea Eats helped families stay healthier

To combat growing food insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic, the local government of Chelsea, Massachusetts implemented Chelsea Eats, an unconditional cash transfer program for low-income residents. J-PAL affiliate [Jeffrey Liebman](#) partnered with the city to evaluate its impact and the results were striking. [Learn more »](#)

Podcast: Why investing in evidence is key to translating AI hype into impact

J-PAL Global Executive Director [Iqbal Dhaliwal](#) and J-PAL affiliate [Dean Karlan](#), along with The Agency Fund's Temina Madon, joined Devex's Global Progress in the AI Era podcast last month. They discussed AI for development and the importance of investing in rigorous evidence to determine whether, and how, AI actually delivers impact and improves lives. [Watch the podcast »](#)

WELCOMING OUR NEW AFFILIATED PROFESSORS

In summer 2025, we welcomed 29 talented researchers to the J-PAL network. We feature a few of them here each month.



[Laura Gee](#)
Tufts University



[Tarek Ghani](#)
Washington University



[Martin Mattsson](#)
National University of Singapore

FEATURED TRAININGS

Applications open: J-PAL Africa's Evaluating Social Programs course

 **Apply by April 30 | Course Dates: June 22–26**

Applications are now open for [J-PAL Africa](#)'s five-day Evaluating Social Programs course at Strathmore University in Nairobi, Kenya. The course provides practical training on how to design and use randomized evaluations to measure social impact and inform policy decisions. Come learn through lectures, real-world case studies from Africa, and interactive group work. [Learn more and apply »](#)

ADEPT partnership spotlight: Fast-track your master's at the George Washington University with DEDP MicroMasters

As a new [Alliance for Data, Evaluation, and Policy Training](#) (ADEPT) pathway university, the George Washington University (GW) offers learners an opportunity to leverage the [DEDP MicroMasters](#) coursework. Learners can receive up to two elective courses towards GW's Master of Science in Applied Economics, potentially saving up to 20 percent on tuition and earning an accelerated degree. [Learn more »](#)

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

[Meeting children where they are to transform learning worldwide](#)

MIT Spectrum

[Nobel de economia fala sobre impactos da incerteza geopolítica e clima](#) (Video)

CNN Brasil Money

[Why paying first works: Designing smarter incentives to tackle crop burning](#)

(Opinion)

The Policy Edge

[Iqbal Dhaliwal: Will AI transform the existing economic growth model? \(Podcast\)](#)

Hindustan Times

[Economics and AI join forces to expand reach of diagnostics](#)

MIT Spectrum

[Machine learning forecasts of child malnutrition integrated into Kenya's drought early warning system for first time](#)

EIN Presswire

NEW RESEARCH PAPERS

[From Access to Achievement: The Primary School-Age Impacts of an At-Scale Preschool Construction Program in Highly Deprived Communities](#)

Marina Bassi, Bruno Besbas, Lelys Dinarte-Diaz, Saravana Ravindran, and Ana Reynoso

[Do Workfare Programs Live Up to Their Promises? Experimental Evidence from Côte d'Ivoire Dual Apprenticeships](#)

Marianne Bertrand, Bruno Crépon, Alicia Marguerie, and Patrick Premand

[Targeting Foundational Skills at Scale: Skill Specificity and Transfer](#)

Andreas de Barros and Theresa Lubozha

[How Do Holistic Wrap-Around Anti-Poverty Programs Affect Employment and Individualized Outcomes?](#)

Javier Espinosa, William N. Evans, David C. Phillips, and Tim Spilde

OPEN POSITIONS

Featured jobs

[AI Policy Lead](#), Cambridge, MA, US

[AI Policy Associate](#), Cambridge, MA, US

[Senior HR Associate](#), Cambridge, MA, US

[Policy and Research Manager](#), Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

[Senior Policy Manager](#), Paris, France

[Pre-Doctoral Researcher](#), Lima, Peru

[Data Fellow \(Accelerator Program\)](#), India (Remote)

[Policy Manager \(Evidence to Policy Labs-GoTN+\)](#), Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

[Project Manager \(The India Climate and Health Data Capacity Accelerator\)](#),
Mumbai, Maharashtra, India

[Research Associate \(Identifying and Nurturing Math Talent at Scale: Piloting\)](#),
Pune, Maharashtra, India

[Research Associate \(TaRL Follow-Up Feasibility Pilot\)](#), Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh,
India

[Senior HR Associate](#), New Delhi, Delhi, India

[Senior Manager/Lead \(Artificial Intelligence for Social Good-AI4SG\)](#), New Delhi,
Delhi, India

[Senior Research Associate \(Targeted, Flexible Microcredits in India\)](#), Coimbatore,
Tamil Nadu, India

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