



J-PAL GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE

# Innovations in Public Sector Management: Evidence on Social Protection Programmes

7 January 2016 | Delhi, India



# Welcome

We warmly welcome you to a conference on Innovations in Public Sector Management: Evidence on Social Protection Programmes, hosted by the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) with support from the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and Evidence for Policy Design (EPoD).

This conference, part of the J-PAL Governance Initiative's policy outreach work, brings together policymakers and researchers to discuss the emerging lessons from several randomised evaluations on the design and implementation of social protection programmes. Sessions will cover the international experience with social protection programmes, experiences from India, and open policy questions for the future. We also hope to provide a productive space for researchers and practitioners to come together and establish new partnerships that explore questions critical to effective governance.

Our aim is to catalyse promising collaborations among attendees, the scale-up of effective programmes, and the wider use of rigorous evaluation methodologies that will continue to improve public service delivery throughout South Asia.

Best regards,

**Ben Olken and Rohini Pande**  
Co-Chairs, Governance Initiative



# Agenda

## Hotel Taj Ambassador, New Delhi, India | 7 January 2016

- 8:30 – 9:45 **Coffee/Tea and Conference Registration**
- 9:45 – 10:00 **Conference Inauguration**
- **Overview of the Governance Initiative and the conference** – Anna Schickele, Initiative Manager
  - **Welcome from J-PAL South Asia** – Shobhini Mukerji, Executive Director and Jasmine Shah, Deputy Director
- 10:00 – 10:30 **Keynote Address: The Need for Innovation and Evaluations**
- Arvind Subramanian, Chief Economic Adviser to the Government of India
- 10:30 – 11:45 **Panel 1: The International Experience with Social Protection Programmes**
- Sebastian Galiani, Professor of Economics, University of Maryland
  - Rema Hanna, Jeffrey Cheah Professor of South-East Asia Studies, Harvard University
  - S. Krishnan, Principal Secretary of Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives, Government of Tamil Nadu
  - Ben Olken, Professor of Economics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- 11:45 – 12:00 **Coffee/Tea Break**
- 12:00 – 1:15 **Panel 2: India's Varied Experience with Social Protection Programmes**
- Jennifer Bussell, Assistant Professor of Public Policy and Political Science, UC Berkeley
  - Karthik Muralidharan, Associate Professor of Economics, UC San Diego
  - Rohini Pande, Mohammed Kamal Professor of Public Policy, Harvard University
  - R. Subrahmanyam, Additional Secretary, Department of Higher Education, Government of India
- 1:15 – 2:15 **Lunch**
- 2:15 – 3:30 **Panel 3: Policy Questions for the Future**
- Anjali Bhardwaj, Founder, Satark Nagrik Sangathan
  - Iqbal Dhaliwal, Deputy Director, J-PAL
  - Thad Dunning, Robson Professor of Political Science, UC Berkeley
  - Rajeev Kapoor, Director, Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration
  - Santhosh Mathew, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India
- 3:30 – 3:40 **Closing Remarks**
- Rohini Pande, Mohammed Kamal Professor of Public Policy, Harvard University

This plenary programme will be followed by small-group project development sessions for invited researchers and implementing partners.



# About J-PAL

The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) is a network of 131 affiliated professors from over 40 universities around the world. Our mission is to reduce poverty by ensuring that policy is informed by scientific evidence. We do this through three main activities:

**Research:** Our affiliates conduct randomised evaluations to test and improve the effectiveness of programmes and policies aimed at reducing poverty.

**Policy Outreach:** We analyse and disseminate research results and build partnerships with policymakers to ensure that policy is driven by evidence and that effective programmes are scaled up.

**Capacity Building:** We equip practitioners with the expertise to carry out their own rigorous evaluations and to understand how to interpret research findings through training courses and joint research projects.

## How We Are Organised

Our Global office is based at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA.

Our South Asia office (see next page) is based in Delhi, India. We have five other regional offices based at leading universities in Africa, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, and Southeast Asia. Our work spans eight sectors: Agriculture, Crime, Education, Environment & Energy, Finance, Health, Labor Markets, and Political Economy & Governance.

## Our Partners

Almost all projects by J-PAL affiliates are carried out with the active participation of implementing organisations, including governments, non-governmental organisations, multilateral organisations, donors, and businesses. These partners share our belief in the power of scientific evidence to help determine what programmes and policies will have the greatest impact in poverty alleviation.



## About J-PAL South Asia

J-PAL South Asia, one of J-PAL's six regional offices, was established in 2007 and is based at the Institute for Financial Management and Research (IFMR). We have over one hundred employees: senior management, policy, and capacity building teams are based in Delhi, while research teams operate out of seven project offices across India.

We work in close partnership with state governments, NGOs, foundations, and international development organisations. We are responsible for carrying out J-PAL's three main activities in South Asia:

**Research:** Our research portfolio comprises of more than 143 ongoing and completed evaluation projects across six countries in South Asia across a range of topics including the effect of new pedagogy aimed at “teaching at the right level” on student outcomes, the effect of effluent trading schemes on plant emissions, and the impact of information campaigns about politician performance on voter behaviour.

**Policy Outreach:** We work to scale-up proven and effective programmes, as well as to share evidence on programmes that work, and those that do not, to inform policy that improves the lives of the poor in South Asia. We are currently working closely with Indian state governments and NGOs to scale-up

two programmes: Teaching at the Right Level, which restructures classrooms by ability rather than age to improve learning outcomes; and Targeting the Hardcore Poor, a comprehensive package of assets and services provided to ultra-poor women that significantly improves income, consumption, and overall welfare.

**Capacity Building:** Since 2011, we have trained more than 3,000 members of central and state governments, NGOs, and academic and multilateral organisations in conducting rigorous impact evaluations. In addition, we host the regional Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results (CLEAR) for South Asia, a World Bank initiative that aims to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation capacity of governments and civil society through training and advisory services.



## J-PAL South Asia Leadership



### Iqbal Dhaliwal

Iqbal Dhaliwal is the Deputy Director of J-PAL, the Co-Scientific Director of J-PAL South Asia, and the Director of Global Policy. Based at MIT in Cambridge, he helps coordinate across J-PAL's eight sectors and six offices. Prior to joining J-PAL, he was a member of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), working as a Deputy Secretary, Director of a state-wide welfare department, and CMD of a public sector company.



### Esther Duflo

Esther Duflo is a Professor of Economics at MIT in Cambridge, a Co-Director of J-PAL, and Co-Scientific Director of J-PAL South Asia. Her research, including many projects in India, seeks to help design and evaluate social policies. She has received many awards including the Clark Medal for the best economist under age forty, the MacArthur "Genius" award, and the Infosys Prize; and is co-author of *Poor Economics*.



### Shobhini Mukerji

Shobhini Mukerji is the Executive Director of J-PAL South Asia, where she provides technical, administrative, financial, and strategic oversight. Prior to J-PAL, Shobhini worked at Pratham, an Indian non-profit initiative working towards universal quality primary education to ensure every child is in school and learning well.



### Jasmine Shah

Jasmine Shah is the Deputy Director of J-PAL South Asia. He leads J-PAL South Asia's efforts to build partnerships with policymakers in the region, provides strategic oversight and support to the capacity building portfolio under CLEAR South Asia, and supports the Executive Director in overall organisational strategy and management.

# About the Governance Initiative

J-PAL's Governance Initiative (GI) funds randomised evaluations of interventions designed to improve participation in the political and policy process, reduce leakages in public programmes, and increase state capacity.

By providing funding for rigorous evaluations of the most promising approaches to improving governance in low-income countries, GI aims to provide evidence as to what works, or does not work, and disseminate these findings to policymakers in governments, foundations, NGOs, and multilateral organisations. To date, GI has awarded US\$5.4 million in funding to 41 unique projects in Africa, Latin America, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. Some of the research projects presented at this conference received GI funding,

and projects that result from the project development sessions may be eligible to apply.

GI is led by J-PAL affiliated professors Ben Olken (MIT) and Rohini Pande (Harvard University), who set the initiative's research priorities and chair the review board. In addition to the co-chairs, Oriana Bandiera (LSE), Frederico Finan (UC Berkeley), and Asim Khwaja (Harvard University) serve on the review board. Anna Schickele is the Initiative Manager.

GI is supported by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the UK Department for International Development.

To learn more, please visit the GI website: [\*\*povertyactionlab.org/gi\*\*](https://povertyactionlab.org/gi).





# Why Randomise?

All projects in J-PAL's research portfolio use the methodology of randomised evaluation to establish causality and rigorously measure a programme's impact.

It is not always obvious which policy will have the largest impact: What is the best way to monitor health workers to reduce absenteeism? Can new information technologies measure and reduce leakages in government funds? Are there cost-effective ways to improve tax compliance among firms?

To design good policy, we need to know how well a policy is working and whether it is a good value for the money. Random assignment offers a simple way to generate these insights. In randomised evaluations, participants (individuals, health centres, firms, etc.) are selected to receive a programme based on a lottery. Those participants who are not selected form a comparison group. Because the selection

is random, the two groups are similar in every respect, except that one group receives the programme while the other does not.

After the programme is implemented, any differences in outcomes between the two groups (e.g., programme participants are absent from work more or less often, or have higher or lower tax compliance) can be attributed to the programme. Being able to clearly identify which effects were caused by the programme gives us insights about its impact.

Randomised evaluations may be particularly appropriate when programmes are oversubscribed, scheduled to be rolled out in a gradual

fashion, or introduced on a small scale with pilot programmes. In those cases, randomisation is one of the fairest ways of determining programme participation.

## About this Conference

Governments ensure social protection for vulnerable citizens through a variety of programmes, including cash transfers, unemployment or disability insurance, workfare schemes, and pensions. These programmes aim to reduce poverty and mitigate citizens' exposure to economic and social vulnerability. On average, low- to middle-income countries spend approximately 1.5 percent of their budget on such programmes, benefiting over 1.9 billion people<sup>1</sup>, yet governments face many challenges with programme design and implementation.

Which programmes will achieve the government's social protection aims, and which will do so cost-effectively? For instance, governments seeking to support the unemployed must consider the impacts, costs, and implications for implementation of workfare programmes relative to unemployment insurance. Likewise, many governments must choose among cash and in-kind transfer programmes or transfer programmes that do and do not impose conditions for receiving benefits. Once designed, how can we ensure that that programme

implementation reaches intended beneficiaries? Ineffective targeting, leakages in procurement and distribution processes, and lack of information may prevent eligible citizens from fully benefiting from these programmes.

Recent innovations have the potential to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of social protection programmes. For example, governments have increased their use of digital technologies for transferring payments, tracking civil servants' performance, and enforcing regulations.

To ensure that programmes reach intended beneficiaries, governments have explored different methods for identifying potential recipients, such as self-targeting or community-based targeting. Many of these innovative programmes have been rolled out relatively recently, so results from rigorous evaluations of these innovations are just beginning to emerge.

This conference on Innovations in Public Sector Management: Evidence on Social Protection Programmes brings together researchers and policymakers

to discuss emerging lessons from research on the design and implementation of social protection programmes. Results from randomised evaluations presented during the conference may help inform ongoing efforts to improve public service delivery in South Asia. Together, researchers and policymakers will explore how effective programmes may be adapted to new contexts.

Research findings often raise new questions. As a result, this conference also aims to accelerate promising research partnerships by bringing together researchers and organisations ready to launch randomised evaluations in small-group sessions following the plenary programme. We hope these partnerships will catalyse new evaluations that test solutions to a range of public management issues across South Asia.

We thank the UK Department of International Development (DFID) and Evidence for Policy Design (EPoD) for their generous support.

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<sup>1</sup>World Bank. 2015. *The State of Social Safety Nets 2015*. Washington, DC: World Bank. doi: 10.1596/978-1-4648-0543-1.



## Keynote Speaker



### Arvind Subramanian

Arvind Subramanian is the Chief Economic Adviser to the Government of India. He is also the Dennis Weatherstone Senior Fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics in Washington, DC and has taught at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government and the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

Arvind was also a Senior Fellow at the Centre for Global Development, Assistant Director in the Research Department of the International Monetary Fund, and served at the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade in Geneva during the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations.

His work has focused on growth, trade, development, and institutions and has

been published widely in both academic journals and leading newspapers such as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Wall Street Journal*. The magazine *Foreign Policy* named him one of the world's top 100 global thinkers in 2011. He received his BA in Economics from St. Stephens College, an MBA from the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad, and an MPhil and DPhil from Oxford University.





## Panel Discussions

Researchers and policymakers will discuss social protection programmes in India and around the world, presenting emerging research results and debating the most important policy questions moving forward.



## Panel 1

# The International Experience with Social Protection Programmes

This panel discusses emerging lessons on improving the targeting and implementation of social protection programmes, drawing on evidence from randomised evaluations in the Dominican Republic and Indonesia.

## Speakers



### Sebastian Galiani

Sebastian Galiani is a Professor of Economics at the University of Maryland. He also serves as Co-Scientific Director of J-PAL Latin America and the Caribbean and as a member of J-PAL's Executive Committee. His research focuses on development economics, health economics, and applied microeconomics.



### Rema Hanna

Rema Hanna is the Jeffrey Cheah Professor of South-East Asia Studies at Harvard University, serves as Co-Scientific Director of J-PAL Southeast Asia, and serves as co-Director of EPoD. Her research focuses on understanding how to improve the provision of public services in developing countries. Her current projects examine discrimination in education in India and the efficacy of various targeting methods for social protection programmes.



### S. Krishnan

S. Krishnan is the Principal Secretary of Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives for the Government of Tamil Nadu. As Principal Secretary, he played an important role in the Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Tamil Nadu and J-PAL, which seeks to institutionalize the use of evidence in policymaking by evaluating innovative programs, strengthening monitoring systems, and enhancing officials' capacity to generate and use data. An Indian Administrative Service officer of the 1989 batch, he served previously as the Senior Adviser in the Office of the Executive Director for India of the International Monetary Fund.



### Ben Olken

Ben Olken is a Professor of Economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He also serves as a Co-Director of J-PAL, Co-Chair of J-PAL's Political Economy & Governance Sector, and Co-Scientific Director of J-PAL Southeast Asia. His research focuses on the political economy of developing countries, with a particular focus on corruption. His current projects seek to reduce corruption and improve targeting of programmes that provide local public goods to villages in Indonesia.



## Panel 2

# India's Varied Experience with Social Protection Programmes

To address poverty and vulnerability, the Government of India implements a range of social protection policies and programmes, including social security, pensions, targeted food-subsidy schemes, and public works programmes. This panel presents evidence from randomised evaluations on innovative uses of information and technology to improve the delivery and impact of such programmes.

## Speakers



### Jennifer Bussell

Jennifer Bussell is an Assistant Professor of Public Policy and Political Science at the University of California, Berkeley. Her research considers the effects of formal and informal institutions—such as corruption, coalition politics, and federalism—on policy outcomes, primarily in South Asia, as well as in Africa and Latin America.



### Karthik Muralidharan

Karthik Muralidharan is an Associate Professor of Economics at the University of California, San Diego and serves as Co-Chair of J-PAL's Education Sector. His research primarily focuses on improving education and health in developing countries. He has studied the impact of performance-pay for teachers, the impact of contract teachers, and the impact of cash grants to schools on student learning outcomes in India.



### Rohini Pande

Rohini Pande is the Mohammed Kamal Professor of Public Policy at Harvard University, serves as Co-Chair of J-PAL's Political Economy & Governance Sector, and serves as Co-Director of EPoD. Her research focuses on the economic analysis of the politics and consequences of different forms of redistribution. Her current projects examine microfinance, voter campaigns, and anti-corruption policies.



### R. Subrahmanyam

R. Subrahmanyam is the Additional Secretary of the Department of Higher Education, Government of India. Previously, he was Joint Secretary at the Ministry of Rural Development. An Indian Administrative Service officer of the 1985 batch, he worked closely with J-PAL researchers on an evaluation of using biometric smartcards for beneficiaries of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.



## Panel 3

# Policy Questions for the Future

This panel explores open policy questions related to the design and implementation of social protection programmes. What approaches have the greatest impact—conditional or unconditional transfers, welfare or workfare programmes? How can governments improve the targeting of programmes to better reach intended beneficiaries? Can technological innovations, such as digital tracking systems or biometric identification, reduce leakages and improve programme delivery?

## Speakers



### Anjali Bhardwaj

Anjali Bhardwaj is a member of the working committee of the National Campaign for People's Right to Information, a leading member of the Right to Food Campaign, and the founder of Satark Nagrik Sangathan (SNS). SNS aims to improve transparency and accountability in governance, with the help of the Right to Information Act, and works primarily among lower income groups of slum settlements in South Delhi.

### Iqbal Dhaliwal

Iqbal Dhaliwal is the Deputy Director of J-PAL, the Co-Scientific Director of J-PAL South Asia, and the Director of Policy (full bio on page 7).



### Thad Dunning

Thad Dunning is the Robson Professor of Political Science at the University of California, Berkeley, and he directs the Center on the Politics of Development. He studies comparative politics, political economy, and methodology. His research in India, Latin America, and Africa has focused on ethnic voting, political representation of minority groups, and the consequences of natural resource wealth for democracy, among other topics.



### Rajeev Kapoor

Rajeev Kapoor is the Director of the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, the apex training institute for the Indian Administrative Service (IAS). Since joining the IAS in 1983, Rajeev Kapoor has worked in finance, health, agriculture, and energy departments in the Government of Uttar Pradesh. He has also worked as Governance Adviser to the UK's Department for International Development.



### Santhosh Mathew

Santhosh Mathew is a political economist with a background in state capacity and sustainable livelihoods. He is presently the Joint Secretary of Information Technology and Skills, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India. An Indian Administrative Service officer of the 1985 batch, he has worked closely with civil society groups promoting the right to information, right to food, and employment guarantee for the rural poor.

## Contact

We welcome inquiries from governments, international organisations, NGOs, foundations, and researchers about potential partnerships in research, training, and policy outreach.

For all questions about the Governance Initiative, please contact Initiative Manager Anna Schickele at [annabs@mit.edu](mailto:annabs@mit.edu).

For all questions concerning J-PAL South Asia, please contact Policy Manager Vishnu Padmanabhan at [vishnu.padmanabhan@ifmr.ac.in](mailto:vishnu.padmanabhan@ifmr.ac.in).

For all concerns regarding logistics, please contact Priyajeet Arora at [priyajeet.arora@ifmr.ac.in](mailto:priyajeet.arora@ifmr.ac.in).

### J-PAL Global

Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
30 Wadsworth Street, E53-320  
Cambridge, MA 02142  
USA

**Phone:** +1 (617) 324-6566

### J-PAL South Asia

Institute for Financial Management and Research  
24 Kothari Road  
Nugambakkam  
Chennai 600 034  
India

**Phone:** +91 44 3247 5056

### J-PAL South Asia Sub-Regional Office

Institute for Financial Management and Research  
AADI, Lower Ground Floor  
2 Balbir Saxena Marg Hauz Khas  
New Delhi 110 016  
India

**Phone:** +91 44 3247 5056









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