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NEWSLETTER

February 2022



Photo: Ivan Mahardika | J-PAL

J-PAL launches new Social Protection Initiative and sector

Last week we launched J-PAL's newest sector, [Social Protection](#), along with the [Social Protection Initiative](#). Sector co-chairs [Rema Hanna](#) (Harvard; Scientific Director, J-PAL Southeast Asia) and [Benjamin A. Olken](#) (MIT; Director, J-PAL; Scientific Director, J-PAL Southeast Asia), affiliates, and staff will work to identify effective policies for low-income families that provide financial assistance; insure against economic, health, climate, and other shocks; and break cycles of poverty. The new research initiative will generate evidence on these topics by funding randomized evaluations of social protection innovations in low- and middle-income countries. [Subscribe](#) to our mailing list to learn more about social protection and receive occasional updates on future publications and events.

[Read more](#)

**Funding new research on
entrepreneurship and enterprise**



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development

Helping entrepreneurs grow back their businesses, create more jobs in their communities, and secure their livelihoods is essential for pandemic response and recovery. In the first-ever entrepreneurship and enterprise development-focused [funding window](#) of the [Jobs and Opportunity Initiative](#), J-PAL supported four new studies to advance the evidence base on the role of firms in job creation. [Read more »](#)



Photo: Katiekk | Shutterstock.com

Launching the Spanish version of our women's empowerment measurement guide

Women's labor market participation and economic empowerment in Central America lags behind that of men's, a challenge that has been further exacerbated during the pandemic. [J-PAL Latin America and the Caribbean](#) and [J-PAL's Gender and Economic Agency Initiative](#) are working together to identify and fund evaluations of strategies to improve women's economic agency. The new [Spanish version](#) of "A Practical Guide to Measuring Women's and Girls' Empowerment in Impact Evaluations" supports policymakers and researchers in developing measurement strategies tailored to local contexts. [Read more »](#)

EVIDENCE-INFORMED DECISION-MAKING



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A federal office to bolster evidence-informed policymaking

The US government established the Office of Evaluation Sciences (OES) in 2015 to help agencies build and use evidence with support from multiple research organizations, including [J-PAL North America](#). Since then, OES has leveraged the expertise of 140 multidisciplinary researchers to conduct over ninety evaluations with twenty federal agencies and

has supported evidence-informed decision-making across a wide range of sectors. [Read more »](#)

FEATURED POLICY INSIGHT



Photo: Aude Guerrucci | J-PAL

Reducing search barriers for job seekers

Job seekers face many barriers to finding quality employment. An updated Policy Insight from J-PAL's [Labor Markets sector](#) that synthesizes findings from thirty randomized evaluations shows that job search assistance programs and other innovations to reduce job search barriers can help people look for work more intensively and efficiently. These programs often had positive impacts on outcomes such as interview offers, job offers, employment, and quality employment. However, not all of the studies measured or found sustained benefits to earnings, total employment, or well-being. [Read more »](#)

FEATURED EVALUATION SUMMARY



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Incentivizing employment through wage subsidies in Sri Lanka

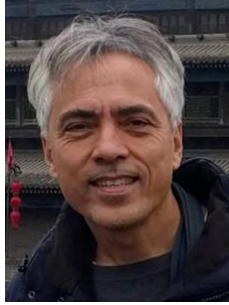
Firms in low- and middle-income countries often have no paid workers except the owner, raising questions about whether labor market barriers prevent self-employed entrepreneurs from hiring. In Sri Lanka, J-PAL affiliated researchers [Christopher Woodruff](#) (University of Oxford) and [Suresh de Mel](#) (University of Peradeniya), with David McKenzie, found that providing wage subsidies to randomly assigned microenterprises increased employment during the subsidy period; they did not find a lasting impact on employment, profitability, or sales. [Read more »](#)

WELCOMING OUR NEW AFFILIATED PROFESSORS

In summer 2021, 38 talented researchers joined the J-PAL network. We will feature a few of them here each month.



Alex Eble
Columbia University
Teachers College



Menno Pradhan
University of Amsterdam
and Vrije Universiteit
Amsterdam



Elizabeth Setren
Tufts University

FEATURED EVENTS

[February 23] Evidence for Climate Action in Europe

While large-scale CO₂ emission mitigation efforts are urgently needed in Europe, few environmental policies have been evaluated in real-world settings. An upcoming webinar will shed light on the process, benefits, and challenges of generating rigorous evidence on climate action. Participants will learn about J-PAL's [King Climate Action Initiative](#) in Europe, opportunities for collaboration, and key takeaways from randomized evaluations led by researchers in the J-PAL network in partnership with governments and the private sector. [Register »](#)

[February 23] Hidden Costs of a Health Crisis: Research on Social Welfare Disruptions in India during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Robust social welfare is crucial for alleviating the myriad stresses of economic uncertainty, learning losses, food insecurity, and poor mental health for groups who have disproportionately been affected by the pandemic and resulting lockdowns. [J-PAL South Asia's](#) next webinar in their ongoing series, [Improving India's Healthcare: Insights from Six Years of On-the-Ground Research](#), explores findings from five studies to understand the hidden costs of the pandemic borne by underserved communities in India, their implications for future social programs, and emerging evidence to help address the adverse impacts of the pandemic. [Register »](#)

[March 9] Expanding the Evidence Base on Workforce Training for Economic Mobility

What role can sectoral training programs play in improving economic mobility and closing racial equity gaps in the labor market? In a webinar hosted by [J-PAL North America](#) and [WorkRise](#), a research-to-action network hosted by the Urban Institute, panelists will review key findings of J-PAL North America's forthcoming policy publication, "Sectoral Employment Programs as a Path to Quality Jobs: Lessons from Randomized Evaluations." Speakers will also share insights from a WorkRise-funded evaluation of the Pursuit Fellowship, a sectoral employment program that equips adults from under-resourced communities with the necessary skills to build careers in the high-wage tech sector, and discuss how study results can contribute to this growing evidence base. [Register »](#)

[Webinar recording] Job Search and Hiring with Limited Information in South Africa

[J-PAL Africa](#) and the South African Labour and Development Research Unit at the University of Cape Town co-hosted a discussion with researchers on insights from labor market research in South Africa. Speakers shared research findings focused on information disconnects between employers and employees, search barriers, and job tool development, as well as key learnings from conducting labor market research in South Africa. [Watch the recording »](#)

FEATURED TRAININGS

[March 8] Register for MicroMasters' spring semester

The current semester of our online MicroMasters in Data, Economics, and Development Policy (DEDP) began February 1, and registration is open until March 8. Learn R while building a strong foundation in probability and statistics in [14.310x Data Analysis for Social Scientists](#), gain an introduction to empirical research in development economics in [14.73x The Challenges of Global Poverty](#), and learn how to design randomized evaluations and implement them in the field in [J-PAL 102x Designing and Running Randomized Evaluations](#). Students who complete the full DEDP credential are eligible to apply for the on-campus [Master's in DEDP](#) at MIT. [Learn more and register »](#)

[Training recap] Training on Randomized Impact Evaluations for Humanitarian Interventions

In December 2021, as part of a [training](#) on randomized evaluations for humanitarian organizations, J-PAL Europe invited Kristen McCollum (Impact Evaluation Analyst, World Food Programme Office of Evaluation) to present an operational perspective on the feasibility and practical considerations of conducting randomized evaluations in humanitarian settings. In this blog post, Kristen shares her thoughts on the potential for rigorous evaluations to guide interventions and how to improve learning in the humanitarian sector. [Read more »](#)

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

[End the pandemic of violence against women \[Opinion\]](#)

Project Syndicate

[Norms that bind us: The free woman who walks in chains \[Opinion\]](#)

Gazeti

[Cash aid to poor mothers increases brain activity in babies, study finds](#)

The New York Times

[How to prevent Covid's next comeback](#)

Foreign Affairs

[Preparing for shocks through universal basic income: Evidence from Kenya \[Opinion\]](#)

African Arguments

NEW RESEARCH PAPERS

[Incentivizing Behavioral Change: The Role of Time Preferences](#)

Shilpa Aggarwal, Rebecca Dizon-Ross, Ariel Zucker

[Financial Diaries and Women's Money Management Behavior: Evidence from a Randomized Controlled Trial](#)

Asad Islam, Vy Nguyen, Russell Smyth, Zabid Iqbal

[Can Simple Psychological Interventions Increase Preventive Health Investment?](#)

Anett John, Kate Orkin

[Narrowing the Gender Gap in Mobile Banking](#)

Jean N. Lee, Jonathan Morduch, Saravana Ravindran, Abu S. Shonchoy

FEATURED JOBS

Senior Education and Training Associate, Abuja, Nigeria
Field Research Associate (Evaluation of the impact of tailored microcredit), Rabat, Morocco
Research Manager (Morocco Employment Lab), Rabat, Morocco
Research Associate (Data), New Delhi, India
Senior Training Manager, New Delhi, India
Policy Manager (King Climate Action Initiative), Cambridge, MA, US
(Senior) Policy Manager (Education), Cambridge, MA, US

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