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**[Test]:J-PAL MENA Newsletter – First Edition**

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J-PAL &lt;reply@email.povertyactionlab.org&gt;

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Reply-To: J-PAL &lt;reply-fec2127671670675-359\_HTML-148217834-100010557-0@email.povertyactionlab.org&gt;

To: nzaky@povertyactionlab.org

To view this email as a web page, go [here](#).**MENA NEWSLETTER**

April 2021



Photo: Haitham Fahmy | J-PAL

Dear all,

Ramadan Kareem! I hope you are having a fulfilling month of contemplation that brings you and your loved ones inner peace and joy.

In the spirit of reflection, I am pleased to share the first edition of the J-PAL MENA newsletter with you. We created this resource to connect you to our work to alleviate poverty through evidence-informed policy. Issued a few times per year, the J-PAL MENA newsletter will share important updates and exciting news, spotlight regional impact evaluations, and feature recent and upcoming policy outreach events.

In this inaugural newsletter, you'll find major news since [launching J-PAL MENA at The American University in Cairo](#), J-PAL's newest regional office, last summer. We also share updates from the [Morocco Employment Lab](#), profile our Co-Scientific Director Adam Osman, and highlight a new research project and event series.

In addition to exploring our first ever J-PAL MENA newsletter, we encourage you to read

how J-PAL's research, policy, and capacity building work evolved to adapt to lockdowns and meet new evidence needs in the short interactive presentation, "[Improving Lives Through Evidence: Adapting to a Changing World.](#)"

Best wishes,



**Alison Fahey**, Interim Executive Director, J-PAL MENA at AUC  
[afahey@povertyactionlab.org](mailto:afahey@povertyactionlab.org)

## NEWS FROM J-PAL MENA



Photo: J-PAL MENA

### J-PAL MENA signs MOU with Egypt's Ministry of Social Solidarity

In January 2021, J-PAL MENA at AUC signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Egyptian Ministry of Social Solidarity to begin an impact evaluation of the Ministry's national nurseries promotion program. With funding support from the World Bank MENA Gender Innovation Lab, the Institute of Labor Economics, and the British Embassy, this partnership will focus on exploring innovative solutions for policy priorities related to increasing female labor force participation and fostering early childhood development. [Read more »](#)



Photo: Eduardo Lopez | Shutterstock.com

### Morocco Employment Lab launches and funds four research projects

The Morocco Employment Lab (MEL) seeks to foster a culture of evidence-based policymaking through rigorous impact evaluations and capacity building. Launched as a partnership between J-PAL, Evidence for Policy Design at the Harvard Kennedy School, the Millennium Challenge Account Morocco Agency, and the Policy Center for the New South in Rabat, MEL aims to improve the effectiveness of Morocco's labor market programs. MEL held a call for proposals and funded four research projects which are now underway. More projects will be funded by the Lab in the coming months. [Read more »](#)



Photo: Nasser Social Bank

## J-PAL MENA signs MOU with Nasser Social Bank

In April 2021, J-PAL MENA at AUC signed an MOU with the Nasser Social Bank (NSB) to evaluate the impact of the Bank's financial service programs for low-income communities in Egypt. Researchers will partner with NSB to understand what works in improving financial inclusion for the poor, share relevant global evidence and lessons learned from studies conducted by J-PAL affiliates, and engage in capacity-building activities to support a culture of evidence use in the design and delivery of financial services and products. [Read more »](#)



Photo: UNICEF

## J-PAL MENA and UNICEF Egypt co-host public webinar on gender and social norms

In March 2021, J-PAL MENA and UNICEF Egypt co-hosted a webinar on shifting social and gender norms to improve development outcomes for girls and women. This webinar took place as the fourth event in the Global Evidence for Egypt seminar series, which brings together Egyptian government representatives, J-PAL affiliates, and members of local NGOs and international organizations to identify and address development policy priorities in Egypt. [Read more »](#)

Learn more about J-PAL MENA's measures in response to Covid-19

### NEW EVIDENCE FROM THE REGION

## Job search assistance for Syrian refugees in Jordan

Stefano Caria (University of Warwick; J-PAL affiliate) and coauthors evaluated the impact of a small cash grant, information, and psychological support on helping Syrian refugees and Jordanian job seekers find work. [Read more »](#)

## TRAININGS



Photo: Uganda Executive Education | J-PAL Africa

### Apply for J-PAL's Evaluating Social Programs course this summer

On June 14-17 and August 9-13, J-PAL Global/J-PAL North America (June) and J-PAL Africa (August) will hold Evaluating Social Programs courses live over Zoom. Through the courses, participants will learn to recognize opportunities for evaluation and randomization, gain an understanding of related concepts, and learn to communicate the importance of randomization. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis, but candidates are encouraged to apply at their earliest convenience. [Read more »](#)



Photo: Laurens Hoddenbagh | Shutterstock.com

### Morocco Employment Lab and J-PAL MENA lead capacity-building for government partners

Capacity-building for government partners is central to our efforts to foster cultures of evidence use. MEL has led several training events, including a [Senior Leadership training](#), [Evaluating Social Programs course](#), and HKS Evidence for Policy Design's [Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence](#). In Egypt, J-PAL MENA recently led a [customized training workshop](#) for staff of the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise Development Agency, the first time J-PAL training content was delivered entirely in Arabic. To learn more about trainings that could support your organization's needs, please contact us at [mena\\_training@povertyactionlab.org](mailto:mena_training@povertyactionlab.org).

## OUR TEAM

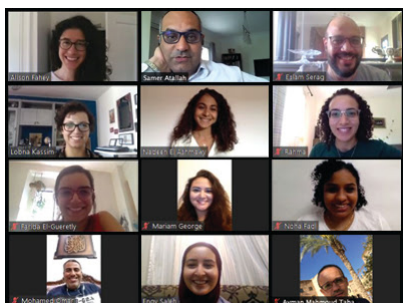


Photo: J-PAL MENA

### J-PAL MENA is awarded AUC Team Excellence Award

In March 2021, J-PAL MENA was awarded The American University in Cairo's Team Excellence Award in recognition of the team's commitment and skills as they established J-PAL's newest regional



office. [Sign up for updates on new opportunities to join the team »](#)

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Photo: Courtesy of Community Jameel

## Affiliate spotlight: Adam Osman

Meet J-PAL MENA Co-Scientific Director Adam Osman (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), who discusses his career, interest in development economics, and the expansion in research opportunities in the MENA region. [Read Adam's Q&A »](#)

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## In memory of our dear colleague and friend: Mohamed Yousef

In October, we experienced the tragic loss of Mohamed Yousef, Senior Research Operations Manager at J-PAL MENA. Mohamed dedicated the past five years to J-PAL, making a tremendous impact on both us as an organization and on the field of development in Egypt. We mourn his loss and send our deepest condolences to his family and friends.

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**J-PAL Middle East and North Africa (MENA)**, based at The American University in Cairo's School of Business, leads J-PAL's work in the Middle East and North Africa region. J-PAL MENA conducts randomized evaluations, builds partnerships for evidence-informed policymaking, and helps partners scale up effective programs.



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