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# J-PAL move to fight poverty in Southeast Asia

JAKARTA: ARAB NEWS

The global research center, the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), officially opened here this week with the mission to reduce poverty in Southeast Asia by translating rigorous research into action.

Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono offered the keynote address at the launch, which was attended by over 300 international and local researchers, government officials and bilateral and multilateral agencies.

The launch event also featured speeches from Professor Muhammad Anis, rector of the Universitas Indonesia, and J-PAL Director Abhijit V. Banerjee, who serves with President Yudhoyono on the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel of eminent persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

J-PAL is a leading international network of researchers that specialises in determining which development programs work, which do not, and why. Established in 2003 and headquartered at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), J-PAL is known for pioneering the use of Randomized Control Trials (RCTs) to test the effectiveness of anti-poverty programs. J-PAL's network of over 80 affiliated professors has produced over 350 randomized evaluations in 52 countries, and more than 63 million people have been reached by policies found to be effective by J-PAL studies.

Since 2007, J-PAL has partnered with the government of Indonesia and local researchers to evaluate the effectiveness of and test innovative poverty reduction programs in Indonesia. These evaluations have helped the government of Indonesia to ensure that

its education, health, and other social protection programs benefit the people most in need across the country.

"We are excited to expand our partnerships with policymakers in Southeast Asia to learn which development programs are truly effective and use these findings to improve how we fight poverty in the region," said Banerjee. The Southeast Asia J-PAL is J-PAL's fifth regional workplace, joining J-PAL's at top universities in Chile, France, India, and South Africa.

J-PAL Southeast Asia is based at the Institute of Economic and Social Research (LPEM-FEUI) within the Universitas Indonesia's Faculty of Economics.

Professor Muhammad Anis, rector of the Universitas Indonesia, said, "We are honored that J-PAL SEA is opening at LPEM-FEUI. I believe that the collaboration between J-PAL and LPEM-FEUI will enhance both research and action to combat poverty, especially in Indonesia. The University of Indonesia strives to be one of the leading research universities, and one of the most outstanding academic institutions, in the world. Our partnership with J-PAL is in line with our vision to be a world-class research university."

Australia, through AusAID, has provided \$ 5.6 million over four years to J-PAL for establishment of the Southeast Asia workplace, which will support researchers to generate more evidence on a broader range of anti-poverty programs.

J-PAL Southeast Asia will also build the capacity of local researchers and policymakers to evaluate the effectiveness their efforts to combat poverty.

J-PAL is hosting a policy and research conference at Universitas Indonesia tomorrow, where academics, donors and researchers will set the research and policy priorities.