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Building a culture of evidence use: Five years of J-PAL MENA

Since 2020, [J-PAL Middle East and North Africa \(MENA\)](#) at the American University in Cairo has partnered with governments, NGOs, and researchers to embed rigorous evaluation and learning in policy systems across the region. This work has driven meaningful change across labor markets, firms, finance, social protection, and the environment.

Over the past five years, J-PAL MENA launched the [Egypt Impact Lab](#) and the [Hub for Advanced Policy Innovation for the Environment](#), established the [MENA Scholars Fellowship](#) to support a new generation of local researchers, and trained over 500 government officials and development practitioners. These milestones reflect a growing ecosystem of evidence and collaboration.

As J-PAL MENA looks to the future, the team remains focused on scaling what works and forging new partnerships to build a more inclusive, evidence-informed policy landscape.

[Read more](#)

The Evidence Effect: How the private sector and funders can catalyze change

The Evidence Effect shares new ideas every week to help shape the future of development. In our most recent posts, members of J-PAL leadership outline:

- [How the private sector can drive inclusive growth](#), drawing on learnings from working with companies, investors, and governments, and how market solutions can work better for people and businesses.
- [Four ways donors can catalyze meaningful change](#)—from funding bold new ideas to embedding evidence in government systems to scale what works.
- [How technology and smart policies can transform government service delivery](#) through making tax systems more effective and fair, piloting and testing new technologies, and rethinking private sector regulation.

Taken together, the evidence is clear: Data-driven approaches and collaboration are key to unlocking the full potential of foreign assistance, philanthropy, and private enterprise.

Catch up on [previous editions](#) of The Evidence Effect and explore our growing set of [transformative examples](#) »

Evaluating innovation in development and why it matters

📍 Paris, France

In June, [J-PAL Europe](#) convened development organizations, government representatives, academics, philanthropists, and journalists to discuss [The Evidence Effect](#) in Paris. The event highlighted the great strides already made in alleviating poverty and the key role European actors play in funding and supporting further advances worldwide. Speakers included the French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot, Deputy Treasury Director Claire Cheremetinski, and Côte d'Ivoire Economy, Planning, and Development Minister Nialé Kaba. On our website, J-PAL Europe shares five key takeaways and photos from the event. [Read more](#) »

EVIDENCE-INFORMED DECISION-MAKING



Photo credit: Vianney Fernandez, J-PAL

Shifting norms and reducing gender-based violence

📍 Mexico City, Mexico

For the past five years, Mexico City's Women's Secretariat (SEMUJERES) has partnered with [J-PAL Latin America and the Caribbean](#) (LAC) and J-PAL affiliated professors to improve support for women experiencing gender-based violence.

Policy issue: In Mexico, 70 percent of women over age 15 report having experienced at least one form of gender-based violence—psychological, physical, sexual, or economic. Addressing this crisis requires evidence-informed strategies that support survivors and challenge harmful gender norms.

Evidence: J-PAL affiliated professors [Gustavo Bobonis](#) (University of Toronto) and [Manisha Shah](#) (UC Berkeley) and J-PAL LAC worked with SEMUJERES to apply insights from randomized evaluations to strengthen its policies and programs. They incorporated research on engaging men to shift attitudes around masculinity and violence, the impact of cash transfers in reducing violence by easing financial stress, and combining cash with programs to shift gender norms.

Research in action: A new Evidence to Policy Case Study shares how SEMUJERES applied research insights to pilot a program to shift harmful gender norms around masculinity and violence. SEMUJERES also adapted and applied best practices from the evidence to its conditional cash transfer program by linking payments to the minimum wage, embedding empowerment surveys, and integrating support services.

[Read the Case Study](#)



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Delivering resilience: A decade of research on flood-tolerant rice seeds

India

Policy issue: Extreme weather events are a growing risk to farmers' productivity and livelihoods. Stress-tolerant crops, like the flood-tolerant rice variety Swarna-Sub1, can strengthen farmers' resilience to weather shocks while maintaining agricultural productivity in years without extreme weather.

Evaluation: Over nine years, researchers conducted five randomized evaluations of different interventions to reduce farmers' barriers to adopting Swarna-Sub1 seeds, build farmers' resilience to flooding, and improve rice yields.

Results: Providing targeted information and training about improved seeds to farmers, and targeted information to private seed suppliers, drove adoption of Swarna-Sub1. The resulting increase in adoption enabled small-scale farmers to reduce flood-related crop losses and encouraged them to boost farm investments, though overall adoption still fell short of estimated demand.

[Read more](#)

Research by: Manzoor Dar (ICRISAT), Alain de Janvry (UC Berkeley), Kyle Emerick (Tufts), Manaswini Rao (University of Delaware), Elisabeth Sadoulet (UC Berkeley), and Eleanor Wiseman (Stanford)

FEATURED BLOGS



Photo credit: Teach Me Well Ghana

From training to impact: Applying evidence to improve learning in Ghana

In Ghana, education practitioners Agnes Arthur (UNICEF Ghana) and Fati Issifu (Promoting Equality in African Schools) are using data and evidence to strengthen foundational literacy and numeracy programs. In a new blog post, they share practical lessons for putting evidence into action in classrooms, including real-time monitoring or adapting teacher training. This is the second post in a [series](#) on J-PAL and UNICEF's Learning Academy. [Read more »](#)

Lessons from building government partnerships in Mexico and Peru

J-PAL Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) continues to champion a culture of evidence use through its partnerships with governments across the region. In the latest blog post from J-PAL LAC's government partnerships [series](#), the team shares key lessons from this journey. They emphasize the importance of clearly defining problems before jumping to

solutions, the multiple pathways to institutionalize evidence use, and the value of continuous learning and adaptation to local contexts. [Read more »](#)

WELCOMING OUR NEW AFFILIATED PROFESSORS

Last summer, 35 talented researchers joined the J-PAL network. Below are the final two members of the 2024 cohort; stay tuned for more on the 2025 cohort.



Alban Ahouré
Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny



Suanna Oh
Paris School of Economics

FEATURED TRAINING

Sharpen your economic intuition with DEDP MicroMasters courses

 **Courses start September 9**

This fall, explore how economic principles help us understand individual behavior, markets, and the design of effective policy, with two courses in MITx and J-PAL's [Data, Economics, and Design of Policy \(DEDP\)](#) MicroMasters program:

- [Microeconomics](#) introduces core concepts such as supply and demand, market equilibrium, and consumer behavior, as well as their applications.
- [Microeconomic Theory and Public Policy](#) builds on these ideas to examine how economic models are used to evaluate real-world policies, from labor markets to international trade.

Courses are taught by MIT faculty and are free to audit, with the option to pay for a proctored exam to earn a course certificate. Learners who complete the full credential (five courses) can apply to MIT's residential master's program in DEDP or to one of several pathway universities. [Enroll today »](#)

👉 MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Abhijit Banerjee, prix Nobel «Nous, économistes du développement, n'avons pas fait un assez bon travail pour dire haut et fort l'importance de l'aide»

Libération

Esther Duflo, Nobel laureate: 'Development aid is not a waste of public money' [Opinion]

Le Monde

Experts gather at UM6P to bridge research and policy on climate, education, jobs

Morocco World News

The retreat from aid is a costly mistake [Opinion]

The Washington Post

NEW RESEARCH PAPERS

Does Gender Tagging Public Works Increase Women's Participation? Experimental Evidence from Haiti, Kenya, and Rwanda

Tanay Balantrapu, Paul Christian, Lelys Dinarte-Diaz, Felipe Dunsch, Jonas Heirman, Dahyeon Jeong, Erin Kelley, Florence Kondylis, Gregory Lane, and John Loeser

Reducing Emissions and Air Pollution from Informal Brick Kilns: Evidence from Bangladesh

Nina Brooks, Debashish Biswas, Sameer Maithel, Grant Miller, Aprajit Mahajan, M. Rofi Uddin, Shoeb Ahmed, Moogdho Mahzab, Mahbubur Rahman, and Stephen P. Luby

Inducing Positive Sorting through Performance Pay: Experimental Evidence from Pakistani Schools

Christina Brown and Tahir Andrabi

Decoupling Taste-Based versus Statistical Discrimination in Elections

Amanda de Albuquerque, Frederico Finan, Anubhav Jha, Laura Karpuska, and Francesco Trebbi

FEATURED JOBS

(Senior) Research and Training Associate, Paris, France

(Senior) Policy Associate (UM6P-J-PAL Agricultural Lab for Africa), Rabat, Morocco

Finance and Operations Associate (UM6P-J-PAL Agricultural Lab for Africa), Rabat, Morocco

Research Intern, Cairo, Egypt

Research Associate, Patna, Bihar, India

Research Associate (System-Based Approaches to Improving Teaching Effectiveness),

Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh, India

Technical Consultant (Aparajita), New Delhi, Delhi, India

Research Associate for Project Development (Quantitative), Jakarta, Indonesia

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