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MENA NEWSLETTER

May 2022



Launch of the Egypt Impact Lab. Photo: Tale Tellers | J-PAL

Dear all,

Eid Mubarak! I hope your return to the office after the Eid holidays finds you refreshed, and that the break offered opportunities for connection and joy with loved ones.

I am pleased to share the second edition of the J-PAL MENA newsletter with you, featuring updates and exciting news, spotlighting regional impact evaluations, and featuring recent and upcoming policy outreach events.

Our teams in Egypt and Morocco have been busy working with partners in government, NGOs, and donor organizations. In recent months we have launched new impact evaluations on topics ranging from climate change to gender discrimination, conducted trainings on the foundations of randomized evaluations in Arabic and French, and shared policy guidance informed by lessons from the evidence base at major convenings. Deepening partnerships with government to help meet national development goals continues to motivate much of our work; read on for updates from the Morocco Employment Lab and news of the launch of the Egypt Impact Lab.

J-PAL MENA's work is part of broader efforts to reduce poverty by ensuring policy is informed by rigorous evidence. For the worldwide perspective, check out J-PAL's latest edition of *Improving Lives Through Evidence*.

Please keep in touch on social media for more ways to be connected to J-PAL MENA and

the Morocco Employment Lab, and I hope to see you soon at an upcoming event in Egypt, Morocco, or online.

Best wishes,



Alison Fahey
Executive Director, J-PAL MENA at AUC
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NEWS FROM J-PAL MENA



Photo: Tale Tellers | J-PAL

The Ministry of Planning and Economic Development (MPED), J-PAL MENA, and partners launch the Egypt Impact Lab

Launched in March, the Egypt Impact Lab aims to strengthen the effectiveness of Egypt's poverty reduction policies by rigorously evaluating promising and innovative government programs and using results to inform scale decisions, with a focus on family planning, social protection, and employment. It will build a culture of evidence-informed decision-making by building government capacity to use evidence in program design and delivery, and using administrative data to facilitate evidence generation.

[Read more »](#)



Photo: Tale Tellers | J-PAL

J-PAL MENA and UNICEF Egypt Global Evidence Series continues

J-PAL MENA at AUC co-hosted a roundtable discussion with UNICEF Egypt titled "Towards an evidence-informed development agenda for Egypt: Fostering government-research partnerships." The roundtable launched the new phase of the Global Evidence Series partnership to identify key development priorities across the Government of Egypt and hone in on areas

where evidence can help meet national development goals. The event featured keynote addresses from HE Nevine El-Kabbag (Minister of Social Solidarity), and Dr. Rema Hanna (Harvard; Co-Scientific Director, J-PAL Southeast Asia; Co-Chair, J-PAL's Social Protection sector). [Read more »](#)

The most recent seminar in the series focused on family planning to promote healthy behaviors. The panel discussion fostered a conversation around Egypt's development priorities and the relevant rigorous global evidence, ultimately providing insights into how we can reduce fertility rates and encourage family planning to curb population growth. The seminar featured Dr. Caroline Krafft (St. Catherine University; J-PAL Invited Researcher), Dr. Tarek Tawfik (Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health and Population), Frederika Meijer (Representative in Egypt, UNFPA); and Dina Heikal (Social and Behavioral Change Officer, UNICEF Egypt). [Read more »](#)



Photo: J-PAL

Tailored capacity building for government

In April and September 2021, J-PAL MENA hosted three-day, in-person trainings on randomized evaluations and their design in real-world settings for members of Egypt's Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises Development Agency. Building on the success of this training, in January 2022 J-PAL MENA offered another training on randomized evaluations for Ministry of Social Solidarity staff with support from the World Bank. The training explored how and why randomized evaluations are used to rigorously measure social impact. [Read more »](#)

Third edition of the Evaluating Social Programs training held in Morocco



Photo: Matthieu Alexandre | J-PAL

In March, the [Morocco Employment Lab](#), a joint effort between J-PAL MENA and Evidence for Policy Design, conducted a hybrid Evaluating Social Programs training tailored to the needs of magistrates of the Cour des Comptes, the supreme body for auditing the use of public funds in Morocco. The training provided an in-depth understanding of how, why, and when randomized evaluations can be used to measure the impact of social policies. The training covered a wide range of concepts related to measuring impact through randomized evaluations, as well as pragmatic considerations when conducting a randomized study.

ONGOING EVALUATIONS IN THE REGION



Photo: Sawiris Foundation for Social Development

Graduating the ultra-poor in Egypt

Researchers are partnering with the Sawiris Foundation, BRAC, and NGO partners to evaluate the impact of the multifaceted livelihood program known as the Graduation approach on ultra-poor households in Upper Egypt, and seeking to identify variations that could make the program more cost-effective and scalable. [Read more »](#)



Photo: KheirWaBaraka

The impact of childcare subsidies and employment services on women's labor force participation in Egypt

Researchers are partnering with Egypt's Ministry of Social Solidarity to test the impact of childcare subsidies, employment services, and their combination on the labor market outcomes of Egyptian women with young children. [Read more »](#)

JOIN US AT UPCOMING EVENTS

May 19: J-PAL MENA and UNICEF



Photo: Shutterstock.com

Egypt to co-host seminar on early childhood development

This seminar is the sixth in the Global Evidence for Egypt Spotlight Series, which brings together Egyptian policymakers and J-PAL affiliated professors in a discussion about how to tackle priority policy issues in Egypt. The seminar will focus on early childhood development and interventions to enhance healthy caregiver and community practices.

It will feature HE Nevine El-Kabbag (Minister of Social Solidarity), Dr. Inas Hegazy (Early Childhood Development Manager, UNICEF), Dr. Karen Macours (Paris School of Economics; Co-Chair, J-PAL's Health sector), and Dr. Wael Abdel-Razek (Head of the Primary Healthcare and Nursery Sector, Ministry of Health and Population). The panel discussion will foster a conversation around Egypt's policy priorities and the relevant rigorous global evidence, ultimately providing insights into how we can encourage investments for long-term human capital development in Egypt. [Register »](#)



Photo: Shutterstock.com

May 24: MEL to host research seminar on job search assistance and matching

As part of the MEL research seminar series, Dr. Kate Orkin (University of Oxford; J-PAL affiliate) will present evidence on how limited information about jobseekers' skills can affect both employers' and jobseekers' behaviors and impact labor market outcomes. The presentation will be in English with real-time translation into French. [Register »](#)

June 2: J-PAL to present knowledge sharing session with Egyptian and Indonesian government partners at IsDB Annual Meetings



Photo: IsDB

J-PAL MENA, in partnership with MPED and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), will hold a knowledge sharing session as part of the IsDB annual meetings taking place in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt. Government officials from Egypt and Indonesia will share their experience generating and scaling evidence-backed programs, Dr. Rema Hanna (Harvard; Co-Scientific Director, J-PAL Southeast Asia; Co-Chair, J-PAL's Social Protection sector) will present her work in partnership with governments around the world, and J-PAL MENA and J-PAL Southeast Asia will present approaches to building "impact labs," with strategic government partners to test innovations in program design and use rigorous research to scale effective programs. Contact [Heba El Sahn](#) to learn more.



Photo: Eduardo Lopez | J-PAL

June 7: MEL to host seminar on youth economic inclusion in Morocco

Hosted in collaboration with MCA Morocco, the Moroccan National Labor Market Observatory, the Policy Center for the New South, and the World Bank in Morocco, this one-day seminar in Rabat will gather high-level policymakers and international researchers to discuss evidence on youth economic inclusion in Morocco. The seminar will provide local decision-makers with global evidence to inform policy development in Morocco and contribute to building a culture of evidence-based policymaking in the country. In preparation for the meeting, MEL is organizing a series of roundtables with key policy partners to identify policy priorities and evidence gaps and discuss research opportunities to improve youth economic inclusion. Contact [Fatine Guedira](#) to learn more.

Stay tuned for details on J-PAL MENA's Evaluating Social Programs course



Photo: Shutterstock.com

In fall 2022, J-PAL MENA will hold the flagship Evaluating Social Programs training in person in Cairo, Egypt. Through the course, 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 open this summer and participation will be limited.

OUR TEAM

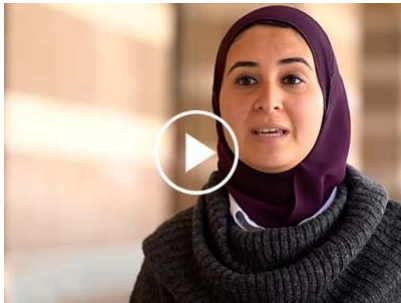


Photo: J-PAL MENA

Working at J-PAL MENA

Meet our team as they discuss their paths to J-PAL MENA and what excites them about development economics and evidence-informed policy in the region. [Meet the team »](#)



Photo: Courtesy of Ahmed Elsayed

Team Spotlight: Ahmed Elsayed

Meet the incoming Director of Research at J-PAL MENA Ahmed Elsayed, joining us July 1. He will also join AUC as a research professor in the department of economics, where he will teach courses on impact evaluation.

Ahmed is an academic researcher with a wide range of interests across migration, labor, development, and applied microeconometrics. His work has been published in several highly-ranked academic journals and other outlets. He is currently a senior researcher at IZA–Institute of Labor Economics in Bonn, Germany, where he co-directs the Gender, Growth and Labor Markets in Low-Income Countries (G²LM | LIC) and the Labor and Development network program areas.

Ahmed received his PhD in economics from Maastricht University in the Netherlands in 2015. Before his PhD, he worked as a researcher under the Royal

Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences Research
Assistantship program.

WORK WITH US

Current openings

(Associate) Director, Finance and Operations - J-PAL MENA, Egypt
Senior Research Associate - Employment Lab, Morocco - J-PAL MENA, Morocco
Senior Design and Communications Associate - J-PAL MENA, Egypt
Research Manager - J-PAL MENA, Egypt

See all career opportunities at J-PAL MENA »

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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