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**NEWSLETTER**

May 2026



A group of women participating in the RedLab program in the Canary Islands. Photo credit: Spanish Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration and REDLAB Canarias

# What helps people on cash benefits find jobs and build better lives?

 Spain

J-PAL Europe is partnering with the Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security, and Migration's Inclusion Policy Lab to evaluate employment and skills programs for people receiving minimum income support. A [recent report](#) on eighteen randomized evaluations reveals that pairing cash benefits with personalized support like job search coaching and digital training can improve employment prospects and quality of life. The Lab offers a model for governments looking to generate evidence on what makes their social programs work better.

[Learn more](#)

## FEATURED BLOGS



The Gahira Bridge in Rwanda. Photo Credit: Robb Hohmann, Fika

## An underrated development investment: Trail bridges

Trail bridges are low-cost, fast to build, and strategically placed at water crossings that separate communities from land, services, and markets. To understand their economic impact, Evan Thomas (University of Colorado Boulder) and J-PAL affiliated professors [Kevin Donovan](#) (Yale) and [Wyatt Brooks](#) (Arizona State)—as part of the [Agricultural Technology Adoption Initiative](#) and [King Climate Action Initiative](#)—partnered with the nonprofit Fika to conduct a randomized evaluation of a trail bridge program in Rwanda. Over three years, the program constructed nearly 100 trail bridges. Household consumption and farm profits rose; economic gains to households over each bridge’s lifetime are expected to nearly double the original construction cost. [Read more »](#)

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## **Evidence Matters: Government partnerships to maximize impact**

Partnerships between governments and researchers have to overcome hurdles like finding the right policy window and navigating administrative challenges. So what's the secret to effective partnerships that drive evidence-informed decision making?

[J-PAL North America's](#) recent Evidence Matters webinar, “10 Lessons for Building Government & Research Partnerships That Matter,” highlights the importance of recognizing everyone’s expertise. [Read more »](#)

On June 2, tune in to the next webinar on incorporating evidence into local budgeting in the United States. [Register now »](#)

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## **Reframing Africa’s jobs challenge**

Formal employment in Africa has remained persistently low. One common way that governments and development funders try to promote business growth and job creation is to help businesses produce more, including by giving them loans and training. But for many businesses, the real constraint isn't production capacity; it's market access. Who can they sell to?

J-PAL Policy Manager [Julia Kaufman](#) and Senior Policy Manager [Ying Gao](#) explore how exports, access to new regional markets, and targeted government support

can help businesses reach new customers, boost productivity, and create more jobs. [Read more »](#)

## **FEATURED PODCAST**



It is harder to move profit than it is to move yield ... once you've seen that, it really does cause you to back up and ask yourself: why has there been so much focus on yield in the first place?"



## **Craig McIntosh on boosting farmers' profits**

On a new VoxDevTalk episode, [J-PAL Agriculture Sector](#) Co-Chair [Craig McIntosh](#) (University of California, San Diego) discusses a recent [J-PAL Policy Insight](#) on how relaxing credit constraints can boost smallholder farmer profits. Drawing on evidence across credit, subsidies, and cash transfers, Craig highlights that credit works best when paired with new agricultural technologies that offer genuine investment opportunities for farmers.

[Tune in »](#)

## **FEATURED EVALUATION SUMMARY**



A mother talks to her infant in Ghana. Photo credit: Anton\_Ivanov, Shutterstock.com

# Every word counts: Encouraging mothers in Ghana to talk with their babies

## 📍 Ghana

**Policy issue:** Using full sentences when talking to babies supports brain and language development. Yet, many parents don't know this or struggle to make it a habit. Can a low-cost video and habit-tracking calendar shift both beliefs and behavior?

**Evaluation:** Researchers partnered with Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) Ghana to study whether a short informational video and specialized tracking calendar could change how often mothers in Tamale, Northern Ghana spoke to their babies—and what they believed about infant language development.

**Results:** Six to eight months later, mothers who were offered the intervention spoke to their babies more frequently and reported stronger communication skills in their children relative to the comparison group. They were also more likely to believe parents should talk to babies from birth. The biggest behavior changes occurred among mothers tracked immediately after viewing the video, suggesting that sustaining the habit, not just starting it, is key to unlocking long-term benefits.

[Read more](#)

**Research by:** [Pascaline Dupas](#) (Stanford), [Camille Falezan](#) (Stanford), [Seema Jayachandran](#) (Princeton), and [Mark Walsh](#) (Stanford)

## WELCOMING OUR NEW AFFILIATED PROFESSORS

*In summer 2025, we welcomed 29 talented researchers to the J-PAL network. We feature a few of them here each month.*



Sarah Miller  
University of Michigan



Steven Raphael  
University of California,  
Berkeley



Adam Szeidl  
Central European  
University

## FEATURED TRAININGS

### Launch your summer learning with DEDP MicroMasters courses

 **Courses start today, May 12!**

Enroll now in the [Data, Economics, and Design of Policy \(DEDP\)](#) MicroMasters summer courses. Registration is now open for [Frontiers of Applied Economics](#), a new course made possible by the generous support of The Calvin K. Kazanjian Economics Foundation. This course will explore microeconomic topics like public finance, industrial organization, market design, transportation economics, psychology, and labor economics. [Learn more »](#)

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### Applications now open for J-PAL North America Research Staff Training 2026

 **Apply by June 12**

[J-PAL North America](#) will host its annual Research Staff Training (RST) in person at Endicott College in Beverley, MA from August 3-6. If you're a full-time research staff member that is new to working on randomized evaluations, this course is for you.

Training sessions will combine lectures, hands-on exercises, and peer learning, providing an opportunity for participants to explore best practices, refine technical skills, and meet other research staff from around the world. Apply before May 15 for a \$250 discount! Applications close June 12. [Learn more »](#)

## **MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS**

[Advocates push TVET to tackle youth unemployment](#)

Ghana News Agency

[Opportunities for computer-assisted learning and outcomes in Puerto Rico](#)

Forward Society Lab

[Can putting a price tag on ending poverty unlock billions in giving? \[Video\]](#)

Devex

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## **NEW RESEARCH PAPERS**

### **Impact of Reminder Messages, With and Without Financial Incentives, on Influenza Vaccination: A Randomized Trial in a California Health System**

Tom Y. Chang (University of Southern California), Mireille Jacobson (University of Southern California), Manisha Shah (University of California, Berkeley), Rajiv Pramanik (Contra Costa Regional Medical Center & Health Centers), and Samir B. Shah (Contra Costa Regional Medical Center & Health Centers)

### **Different Paths to College Success: The Impact of Massachusetts' Charter Schools on College Trajectories**

Sarah R. Cohodes (University of Michigan) and Astrid Pineda (World Bank)

### **An Experimental Evaluation of Deferred Acceptance: Evidence from Over 100 Army Officer Labor Markets**

Jonathan M.V. Davis (University of Oregon), Kyle Greenberg (United States Military Academy at West Point), and Damon Jones (University of Chicago)

### **Remittance Frictions and Seasonal Poverty**

Ahmed Mushfiq Mobarak (Yale), Corey Vernot (University of Chicago), and Arjun Kharel (Centre for the Study of Labour and Mobility)

## **FEATURED JOBS**

Associate Director of Policy, Accra, Ghana or Nairobi, Kenya

Data Fellow (Accelerator Program), India; Remote

Senior Data Research Associate (Strengthening Data Systems and Analytics), New Delhi, Delhi, India

Policy Manager (Evidence to Policy Labs-GoTN+), Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

Research Associate (Tamil Nadu Aging Portfolio-TN Aging), Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

Senior Manager/Lead (Artificial Intelligence for Social Good-AI4SG), New Delhi, Delhi, India

Senior Research Associate (Targeted, Flexible Microcredits in India), Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India

AI Policy Associate, Cambridge, MA, US

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