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NEWSLETTER
January 2021



J-PAL's Senior Management Team gathered in Paris in February 2020. Photo: J-PAL

Adapting to a changing world

Today, in the midst of a global pandemic that has imposed untold suffering on millions, there are signs of hope. Although the vaccine is being rolled out in the coming year, the pandemic will still alter the course of the next decade, particularly for the world's poorest people.

J-PAL was not immune to the many downsides of the Great Lockdown but continued working with many new and existing partners in creative ways to meet the needs of a changing world. We launched new research and scaling initiatives focused on addressing pressing challenges in [climate change](#), [labor markets](#), and [women's economic agency](#). We also opened our newest research center in the [Middle East and North Africa](#) region, which will focus on generating rigorous research to reduce poverty and support evidence-informed decision-making in the region. And our work [evolved](#) to meet the critical research, policy, and training needs that arose as a result of the pandemic.

I invite you to read our highlights from 2020 and how we'll continue to [build on lessons learned](#) during this challenging year in my [annual letter](#).

Global Executive Director, J-PAL
@IqbalDhali



Photo: Garrick Ng | Studio Amarelo

Reducing intimate partner violence in Ethiopia

Thirty percent of women worldwide will experience physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime. As a result of lockdowns caused by Covid-19, many countries are witnessing a rise in cases of intimate partner violence (IPV). On our blog, we explore how Unite for a Better Life, a program to promote gender-equitable relationships, aims to address high levels of IPV in Ethiopia. [Read more »](#)



Photo: J-PAL

New metadata repository for randomized evaluations

In 2013, J-PAL began working with the American Economic Association to create the [Randomized Controlled Trial Registry](#), which seeks to document all randomized evaluations in the social sciences to promote research transparency. We've compiled metadata from over 4,000 registrations in 150 countries and are now publishing this metadata in monthly snapshots. [Read more »](#)

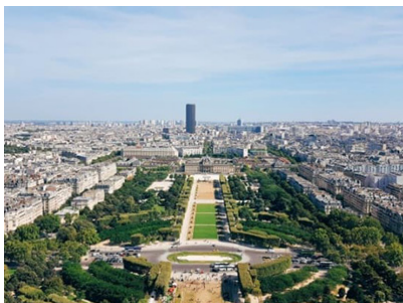


Photo: Lucas Gallone | Unsplash

Esther Duflo to chair new development fund in France

The French government announced plans to launch the Fund for Innovation in Development (FID) to test, develop, and scale evidence-informed innovations to reduce poverty and inequality in low- and middle-income countries. [Esther Duflo](#) (MIT; Director, J-PAL; Scientific Director, J-PAL South Asia) will serve as the Fund's inaugural chair. FID is expected to launch in early spring with €15 million in funding for its first year. [Read more »](#)

INFORMING RESPONSES TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS



Photo: Diana Lotero Prada | Shutterstock.com

Improving adherence to Covid-19 health guidelines

Even as approved vaccines are rolled out, continued adherence to prevention measures, such as social distancing, mask wearing, and handwashing, remains essential. On our blog, J-PAL's [Health sector](#) distills lessons from randomized evaluations by J-PAL affiliated professors that can help inform policymakers' decisions to curb the spread of Covid-19. [Read more »](#)

The effect of the Covid-19 crisis on small businesses

How has the pandemic altered the business landscape in low- and middle-income countries? J-PAL's [Firms sector](#) synthesized results from surveys conducted by researchers in the J-PAL network assessing the impact of Covid-19 on micro, small, and medium enterprises from around the world. [Read more »](#)

Tailoring public health messaging to minority communities in the United States

Black and Latinx communities in the United States are disproportionately affected by Covid-19. One contributing factor to this disparity is knowledge gaps, which may reflect a lack of effort to design Covid-19 messaging with minority communities in mind. New

research, conducted in partnership with Massachusetts General Hospital, tested the impact of different types of public health messages on reducing knowledge gaps and changing health behaviors. [Read more »](#)

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

EVIDENCE-INFORMED DECISION MAKING



Photo: Precision Agriculture for Development

Mobile phone-based technology to deliver agricultural information

Many traditional agricultural extension models seek to provide advice to farmers but do not effectively deliver the information. Research from [India](#) and [Kenya](#) shows that mobile phone-based extension can be effective in delivering tailored and timely agricultural information. This evidence contributed to the founding of Precision Agriculture for Development, whose mission is to diffuse this new model of extension and support smallholder farmers in low- and middle-income countries. [Read more »](#)

FEATURED PUBLICATION



Photo: Asianet-Pakistan | Shutterstock.com

Increasing vaccination rates in Pakistan through performance-based incentives

J-PAL affiliated professor [Michael Callen](#) (London School of Economics) and coauthors worked with the Department of Health in Lahore, Pakistan, to study the relationship between motivation among health workers and vaccination rates. They found that performance-based incentive pay, especially when tailored to individual characteristics, reduced procrastination and improved vaccination rates. [Read more »](#)

FEATURED AFFILIATED PROFESSOR



Photo: UC Santa Barbara

Kelsey Jack on environmental and development economics

Kelsey Jack (UC Santa Barbara; Co-Chair, J-PAL’s Environment, Energy, & Climate Change sector) shares how her work as co-chair of the [King Climate Action Initiative](#) is helping generate rigorous evidence at the intersection of environmental and development economics. [Read more »](#)

WELCOMING OUR NEW AFFILIATED PROFESSORS

This past summer, 34 new affiliated professors joined the J-PAL network. We'll feature a few of them here each month; click through to read more about their research interests.



Michela Carlana
Harvard Kennedy School



John List
University of Chicago



Abu Shonchoy
Florida International University

FEATURED EVENTS

[January 21] Covid Dialogue Series: Supporting Working Women During Covid-19

The Covid-19 crisis has brought into focus the importance of worker rights and workplace protections, particularly for women, who are disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Join us for a discussion with researchers and policymakers on how governments and employers can better support workers. [Register »](#)

[January 29] Covid Dialogue Series: Strengthening Covid-19 Prevention – From Handwashing to Vaccine Uptake

How can governments effectively communicate Covid-19 prevention behaviors? In this J-PAL South Asia webinar, [Esther Duflo](#) (MIT; Director, J-PAL; Scientific Director, J-PAL South Asia) and senior government health officials leading Covid-19 response efforts in India will share lessons to inform Covid-19 vaccine uptake, drawing on rigorous research and implementation experience. [Register »](#)

UPCOMING TRAININGS

Enroll now in the MicroMasters' spring semester

The next semester of our online MicroMasters in Data, Economics, and Development Policy (DEDP) begins February 9. Through a series of five online courses and in-person exams, learners will gain a strong foundation in microeconomics, development economics, and probability and statistics, while engaging with cutting-edge field research. Students who complete the full DEDP credential are eligible to apply for the [blended master's program](#) in DEDP at MIT. [Learn more and register »](#)

Enroll now in J-PAL 101x: Evaluating Social Programs

J-PAL's online Evaluating Social Programs course is open! This is a free, self-paced course to learn how to use randomized evaluations to rigorously measure the impact of social programs. Through lectures from MIT faculty and J-PAL affiliated professors, along with case studies of real randomized evaluations, participants will cover topics ranging from how to effectively measure outcomes and choose an appropriate sample size, to common threats to analysis. [Learn more and register »](#)

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

[The power of data and evidence in delivering effective social assistance \[Opinion\]](#)
World Bank Blogs

[Esther Duflo: Foreign aid at risk of becoming 'irrelevant' \[Opinion\]](#)
Devex

[Unpaid electric bills undermine efforts to improve access: Study](#)
The Economic Times

[Second stimulus check update: Democrat proposes releasing aid to people only after Covid-19 inoculation](#)
International Business Times

NEW RESEARCH PAPERS

Tackling Youth Unemployment: Evidence from a Labor Market Experiment in Uganda
Livia Alfonsi, Oriana Bandiera, Vittorio Bassi, Robin Burgess, Imran Rasul, Munshi Sulaiman, Anna Vitali

Cash Transfers as a Response to Covid-19: Experimental Evidence from Kenya
Wyatt Brooks, Kevin Donovan, Terence R. Johnson, Jackline Oluoch-Aridi

Mechanizing Agriculture Impacts on Labor and Productivity
Julieta Caunedo, Namrata Kala

Home Alone versus After-school Programs: The Effects of Adult Supervision on Child Academic Outcomes
Claudia Martínez A., Marcela Perticará

FEATURED JOBS

Senior Research Associate, Santiago, Chile
Post-doctoral Fellow, Cairo, Egypt
Policy Associate, New Delhi, India
Pre-doctoral Fellowship in Child Health, New Delhi, India
Research Associate, Reducing Distress Migration, Bhubaneswar, India
Research Associate, Direct Benefit Transfers for Electricity, Chandigarh, India
Research Associate, Improving Opioid De-addiction Protocols, Chandigarh, India
Research Associate, Payments & Governance Research Program, New Delhi, India
Senior Communications Manager, New Delhi, India
Postdoctoral Research Fellow/Associate, Digital ID & Finance Initiative, Cambridge, MA, US or Nairobi, Kenya
Research, Education, & Training Associate, Cambridge, MA, US or abroad

[Explore open positions around the world »](#)

The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) is a global research center working to reduce poverty by ensuring that policy is informed by scientific evidence. Anchored by a network of more than 225 affiliated professors at universities around the world, J-PAL draws on results from randomized impact evaluations to answer critical questions in the fight against poverty. We build partnerships with governments, NGOs, donors, and others to share this knowledge, scale up effective programs, and advance evidence-informed decision-making. J-PAL was launched at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 2003 and has regional centers in Africa, Europe, Latin America & the Caribbean, Middle East & North Africa, North America, South Asia, and Southeast Asia.



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