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**NEWSLETTER**

November 2020



## Improving economic opportunities for women in the Middle East and North Africa

Despite substantial progress in the last few years, the economic gender gap in Egypt and throughout the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region continues to be one of the highest in the world. Many factors contribute to this, including social norms, misinformation, employer discrimination, and poor job conditions.

On the J-PAL blog, J-PAL affiliated professor [Adam Osman](#) (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Scientific Director, J-PAL MENA) and staff from J-PAL MENA discuss evidence from recent randomized evaluations suggesting that there are untapped opportunities to reduce this gender gap through policies that increase access to information and improve work conditions and safety.

[Read more](#)

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**J-PAL directors on practical**



## economics and smart partnerships

In the Chandler Foundation's *Social Investor* magazine, [Abhijit Banerjee](#) (MIT; Director, J-PAL; Scientific Director, J-PAL Europe), [Iqbal Dhaliwal](#) (Executive Director, J-PAL; Scientific Director, J-PAL South Asia), and [Esther Duflo](#) (MIT; Director, J-PAL; Scientific Director, J-PAL South Asia) shared their vision on leveraging economics and partnerships for greater public and social good.

Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo on their vision for how economics can make the world a better place and new projects on the horizon: [Read more »](#)

Iqbal Dhaliwal on how smart partnerships between governments, evidence-to-policy organizations, and philanthropists can create an outsized social impact: [Read more »](#)



## J-PAL Africa highlights the work of African scholars

On our blog, J-PAL Africa spotlights the work of several economists from the African continent who are focused on using experimental methods to alleviate poverty. Their inaugural posts in this series feature Faith Masekesa and Kodjo Aflagah.

Faith Masekesa supports J-PAL Africa's administrative data partnership with the City of Cape Town. [Read more »](#)

Kodjo Aflagah supports Teaching at the Right Level Africa and the Digital Identification and Finance Initiative. [Read more »](#)

## FEATURED POLICY INSIGHT

## Increasing accountability and reducing corruption through



## government audits

When elected officials and bureaucrats are not held accountable for their wrongdoing, citizens can lose trust in their government. Audits—-independent investigations that seek to uncover misconduct—are a tool governments can use to expose fraud, negligence, or noncompliance with laws and regulations by the government itself, taxpayers, or firms. A review of 20 randomized evaluations showed that audits tended to be an effective policy to increase political accountability, reduce misuse of public resources, and improve compliance with laws and regulations. [Read more »](#)

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## FEATURED PUBLICATION



## Enhancing women's agency: Cross-cutting lessons from a new evidence review

The ability of women to define and act on their goals, make decisions that matter to them, and participate in the economy and public life is limited in many contexts around the world. J-PAL's [Gender sector](#) synthesized evidence from over 160 studies to distill what approaches may be effective in enhancing women's agency and why. [Read more »](#)

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## FEATURED AFFILIATED PROFESSOR



## Donald Green on campaign tactics during COVID-19 and the evolution of election science

[Donald Green](#) (Columbia) shares insights into his research on get-out-the-vote tactics and what these findings could mean for elections in the age of COVID-19. [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.*



Gustavo Bobonis  
University of Toronto



Bridget Terry Long  
Harvard University



Simon Quinn  
University of Oxford

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## FEATURED EVENTS

### **[November 18] Social Contact in Divided Societies: Emerging Insights and Implications for Practice**

J-PAL and Innovations for Poverty Action are hosting a webinar series to showcase emerging results and policy lessons from the first three years of the [Governance, Crime, and Conflict Initiative](#). Panelists of the first webinar on social contact will include Betsy Levy-Paluck (Princeton), Salma Mousa (Stanford), Matt Lowe (University of British Columbia), and Danjuma Dawop (Head of Conflict Management and Social Cohesion, Mercy Corps Iraq). [Learn more and register »](#)

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### **[November 20] Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic: Lessons from Randomized Evaluations to Increase Uptake of Testing**

Hosted by J-PAL affiliated professor [Marcella Alsan](#) (Harvard; Co-Chair, US Health Care Delivery Initiative), the next session of J-PAL North America's webinar series, "Charting the Next Decade of Evidence Generation in State and Local Government," will explore how researchers and governments can partner on rigorous research to combat the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color. [Learn more and register »](#)

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### **[Webinar recording] Driving Systems Change Through Governments to End Extreme Poverty**

In celebration of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (October 20), J-PAL and BRAC hosted a panel discussion with Shameran Abed (Senior Director, BRAC), [Abhijit Banerjee](#) (MIT; Director, J-PAL; Scientific Director, J-PAL Europe), Achim Steiner (Administrator, UNDP), and Carolina Trivelli (Senior Researcher, Instituto de Estudios Peruanos), and featured remarks from Amina Mohammed (Deputy Secretary-General, United Nations). [Watch the recording](#) »

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## **[Webinar recording] Social Assistance Response to External Shocks in Egypt**

J-PAL MENA and UNICEF in Egypt hosted a webinar to explore how existing social assistance programs could be enhanced in response to the COVID-19 crisis and large external shocks in general. The webinar featured J-PAL affiliated professor, [William Parienté](#) (Université Catholique de Louvain), H.E. Nivine El-Kabbag (Minister of Social Solidarity in Egypt), and Noura Selim (Executive Director, Sawiris Foundation for Social Development). [Watch the recording](#) »

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### **UPCOMING TRAININGS**

#### **Enroll now: Measuring Health Outcomes in Field Surveys**

J-PAL 350x, Measuring Health Outcomes in Field Surveys, is open! While the course started in October, there is still time to enroll in this free, self-paced online course to learn best practices for conducting rigorous global health research. Participants will learn from public health researcher Vandana Sharma, as she features her work in India and Kenya, and gain practical insights on study design and measurement through case studies and exercises. [Learn more and register](#) »

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

J-PAL's online Evaluating Social Programs course is now 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](#) »

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### **MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS**

Podcast series from J-PAL North America shares stories behind the impact of summer jobs in the US

MIT News

A better education for all during—and after—the COVID-19 pandemic  
Stanford Social Innovation Review

Improving last mile delivery of public services by leveraging digitized data  
United Nations World Data Forum

New research shows tutoring can improve academic outcomes, mental health  
Phys.org

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## NEW RESEARCH PAPERS

E-governance, Accountability, and Leakage in Public Programs: Experimental Evidence from a Financial Management Reform in India

Abhijit Banerjee, Esther Duflo, Clément Imbert, Santhosh Mathew, Rohini Pande

Randomizing Religion: The Impact of Protestant Evangelism on Economic Outcomes

Gharad T. Bryan, James J. Choi, Dean Karlan

The Impact of Default Options for Parent Participation in an Early Language Intervention

Lisa A. Gennetian, Lerzan Z. Coskun, Joy L. Kennedy, Yana Kuchirko, J. Lawrence Aber

Nudging Timely Wage Reporting: Field Experimental Evidence from the United States Social Supplementary Income Program

C. Yiwei Zhang, Jeffrey Hemmeter, Judd B. Kessler, Robert D. Metcalfe, Robert Weathers

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## FEATURED JOBS

J-PAL's global recruitment drive launches this month! Between November 23, 2020 and January 11, 2021, J-PAL and our partner organizations are recruiting for positions in education, finance, operations, policy, research, and training.



In our video series, we hear from staff across the world about their experience working at J-PAL.

Watch the videos

Senior Policy Associate, Girls' Education, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Senegal  
Research Associate, Crime, Violence, & Conflict, Cape Town, South Africa  
Research Associate, Labor Markets, Johannesburg, South Africa  
Policy Manager, Financial Inclusion, New Delhi, India  
Policy & Training Manager, Bhubaneswar, India  
Research Associate, Place-SSE, Nagaon, India  
Training Manager, New Delhi, India  
Administrative Associate, Jakarta, Indonesia  
Research Associate, Jakarta, Indonesia  
Development Coordinator, Cambridge, MA, US  
Operations & IT Associate, Cambridge, MA, US  
Post-Doctoral Associate, King Climate Action Initiative, Cambridge, MA, US  
Pre-Doctoral Research Fellow/Research Associate, Cambridge, MA, US

[Explore a full list of open positions around the world »](#)

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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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