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**NEWSLETTER**

October 2020



## Announcing a new resource on using administrative data for research and policy

J-PAL recently launched a new handbook on [Using Administrative Data for Research and Evidence-based Policy](#). In our digital world, governments, NGOs, and firms constantly collect and store data that has tremendous potential to inform better social policies and improve lives, but this administrative data is often underutilized. From J-PAL's [Innovations in Data and Experiments for Action Initiative \(IDEA\)](#), which aims to increase the use of administrative data for evidence-informed decision-making, the handbook offers technical guidance from over 40 authors and compelling case studies of innovative and successful data partnerships from around the world.

Over the next three months, IDEA will be hosting an [accompanying webinar series](#), featuring presentations and Q&A sessions with chapter authors. [Read more »](#)

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**#DayoftheGirlChild: Preventing a**



## surge in teenage pregnancies due to COVID-19

This year, a generation of girls may experience irreversible setbacks in gender equality and education. School closures and higher poverty rates resulting from the COVID-19 crisis are predicted to increase rates of child marriage and teenage pregnancies around the world. In recognition of International Day of the Girl Child on October 11, we highlighted key interventions policymakers and practitioners can consider for reducing child marriages and teenage pregnancies. [Read more »](#)



## Clarifying common misconceptions in cost-effectiveness analysis

In a world with limited resources, comparing the cost-effectiveness of different programs with similar goals can offer insight into which are likely to provide the greatest value for money. While a cost-effectiveness analysis alone may not provide sufficient information to inform all policy or investment decisions, it can be a useful starting point for decision-makers. [Read more »](#)

## INFORMING RESPONSES TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS



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## Using smartphones to trace mobility during lockdowns

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, many countries instated large-scale regional lockdowns. In Indonesia, J-PAL affiliated professors [Arya Gaduh](#) (University of Arkansas), [Rema Hanna](#) (Harvard; Scientific Director, J-PAL Southeast Asia), and [Benjamin A. Olken](#) (MIT; Director, J-PAL; Scientific Director, J-PAL Southeast Asia), and coauthor [Gabriel Kreindler](#), analyzed anonymous location data from smartphones to provide insights on changes in migration patterns during these lockdowns. [Read more »](#)

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## Universal basic income for pandemic resilience

A [recent study](#) in Kenya, conducted by J-PAL affiliated professors [Abhijit Banerjee](#) (MIT; Director, J-PAL; Scientific Director, J-PAL Europe), [Paul Niehaus](#) (UC San Diego), and [Tavneet Suri](#) (MIT; Scientific Director, J-PAL Africa), and coauthors [Michael Faye](#) and [Alan Krueger](#), showed that a pre-existing universal basic income resulted in modest improvements in well-being that persisted through the onset of the COVID-19 crisis. Results suggest that income supplements during a crisis can be valuable, but more support may be needed to shield households from large economic shocks. [Read more »](#)

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## Expanding access to jobs and the social safety net

In the United States, the COVID-19 crisis has led jobless claims and unemployment rates to skyrocket, disproportionately impacting low-income, female, and non-white workers.

J-PAL North America's [COVID-19 Recovery and Resilience Initiative](#) aims to identify effective ways to support workers in the face of COVID-19-related job and wage losses by evaluating innovative strategies to boost income and employment and connect workers to social benefits. [Read more »](#)

Learn more about J-PAL's latest response to COVID-19

## FEATURED INSIGHT



### **Reducing community college dropout through comprehensive support**

Enrolling nearly half of all undergraduates in 2015, community colleges are an essential component of the higher education landscape in the United States. However, a large share of community college students drop out before they earn a credential or degree. A review of four randomized evaluations showed that providing students with comprehensive support, such as counseling, tutoring, and financial assistance, improved rates of persistence and graduation by addressing multiple barriers that students face. [Read more »](#)

## FEATURED PUBLICATION



### **Improving use of agricultural technologies to increase farmers' profits**

J-PAL affiliated professors [Jeremy Magruder](#) (UC Berkeley), [Craig McIntosh](#) (UC San Diego; Co-Chair, J-PAL Agriculture sector), and [Tavneet Suri](#) (MIT; Scientific Director, J-PAL Africa; Co-Chair, J-PAL Agriculture sector), and coauthor Leah Bridle, discuss what they've learned from sharing evidence with implementing partners and donors from the



[Agricultural Technology Adoption Initiative](#) over the past five years. They highlight the range of constraints farmers face in adopting new technologies and the need to focus future research on policies and programs that better include farmers in domestic and global value chains. [Read more »](#)

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## FEATURED AFFILIATED PROFESSOR



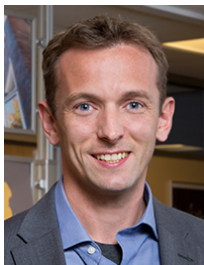
### Alicia Sasser Modestino

J-PAL affiliated professor [Alicia Sasser Modestino](#) (Northeastern) discusses the design and implementation of her ongoing randomized evaluation of an opioid buyback program in the United States. She shares what motivated the project, how the research partnership with a local community health center came to be, and what the unexpected challenges were that the research team faced. [Read more »](#)

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## 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.*



Martin Abel  
Middlebury College



Pamela Jakiela  
Williams College



Felix Masiye  
University of Washington

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## FEATURED EVENTS

### October 14: Twitter Chat on Advancing Women's Financial Inclusion

From 8-9am EST tomorrow, J-PAL and the Center for Effective Global Action's Digital Credit Observatory will be on Twitter discussing and answering your questions on the role of financial inclusion to advance women's economic empowerment. Join the conversation by tweeting [@JPAL](#) and [@CEGA\\_UC](#) with [#FinclusionWeek](#)!

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## **October 16: Launching the Inclusive Financial Innovation Initiative**

J-PAL Southeast Asia is hosting a webinar to launch the [Inclusive Financial Innovation Initiative](#) and share relevant findings from a global literature review, empirical analysis, and in-depth interviews with policymakers, practitioners, academics, and NGOs. The webinar, facilitated by J-PAL affiliated professor [Simone Schaner](#) (USC) and Indonesian government representatives, will focus on how generating rigorous evidence on digital financial services and e-commerce can be valuable for improving financial inclusion. [Register now »](#)

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## **October 20: Driving Systems Change Through Governments to End Extreme Poverty**

Join J-PAL and BRAC for 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), featuring remarks from Amina Mohammed (Deputy Secretary-General, United Nations). To view the live stream, tune into [BRAC's YouTube channel](#) at 9am EST on Tuesday, October 20.

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## **October 27: Charting the Next Decade of Evidence Generation in State and Local Government**

Hosted by J-PAL North America's [State and Local Innovation Initiative](#), an ongoing webinar series explores some of the key policy and research priorities facing these governments in the United States. The series, Charting the Next Decade of Evidence Generation in State and Local Government, shares actionable insights on how these governments and researchers can partner to develop and implement evaluations related to the COVID-19 crisis, racial equity, and climate change and environmental justice. [Watch past recordings and register »](#)

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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 on October 4, 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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## MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Mission Karmayogi: An ambitious plan to bolster state capacity (Opinion)  
Hindustan Times

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

J-PAL North America launches research initiative to focus on Covid-19 recovery  
MIT News

Diverse international cohort first to earn MIT master's degrees in data, economics, and development policy  
MIT News

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## NEW RESEARCH PAPERS

Anonymity or Distance? Job Search and Labor Market Exclusion in a Growing African City  
Girum Abebe, Stefano Caria, Marcel Fafchamps, Paolo Falco, Simon Franklin, Simon Quinn

The (Lack of) Distortionary Effects of Proxy-Means Tests: Results from a Nationwide Experiment in Indonesia  
Abhijit Banerjee, Rema Hanna, Benjamin A. Olken, Sudarno Sumarto

An Adaptive Targeted Field Experiment: Job Search Assistance for Refugees in Jordan  
A. Stefano Caria, Grant Gordon, Maximilian Kasy, Simon Quinn, Soha Shami, Alexander Teytelboym

Autonomy and Specificity in Agricultural Technology Adoption: Evidence from Mexico  
Carolina Corral, Xavier Giné, Aprajit Mahajan, Enrique Seira

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**FEATURED JOBS**

Senior Policy Associate, Girls' Education, Nigeria, Senegal, or Côte d'Ivoire  
Research Associate, Crime, Violence & Conflict, Cape Town, South Africa  
Research Associate, Labor Markets, Johannesburg, South Africa  
Communications Associate, CLEAR, New Delhi, India  
Policy Manager, Financial Inclusion, New Delhi, India  
Research Associate, New Delhi, India  
Research Associate, Place-SSE, Nagaon, India  
Senior Designer, Creating Learning Opportunities for Public Officials in India, New Delhi, India  
Training Manager, New Delhi, India  
Research Associate, Jakarta, Indonesia

[Explore 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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