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NEWSLETTER
November 2023



Stellina Pana, Gifty Amaney, and Pascaline Dupas discuss their education research in Ghana at J-PAL's 20th anniversary celebration on November 3, 2023 at MIT in Cambridge, MA. Photo credit: Bryce Vickmark for J-PAL

Celebrating 20 years and looking to the future

We opened our doors in 2003 with a mission to reduce poverty by ensuring that policy is informed by scientific evidence. In our first decade, we set out to build a global infrastructure for rigorous research in new contexts. In our second decade, we worked with hundreds of partners to transform how evidence is applied to policy change and strengthen researcher and implementer capacity—all with the goal of improving lives around the world.

On November 3, we hosted an event at MIT in Cambridge, MA, that brought together a diverse group of partners to reflect on two decades of progress and look to the future. The event showcased perspectives of people engaging directly with evidence-informed policies, featuring program participants and implementing partners sharing their stories and their reflections on J-PAL at 20.

At the event, [Esther Duflo](#) (MIT; Director, J-PAL; Scientific Director, J-PAL South Asia) spoke about the importance of expanding education and training to reach the next generation of researchers and policymakers. With demand for evidence continuing to grow, the world needs many more people with the capacity, ambition, and opportunity to make change. As we look to our next decade, we're exploring new ways to equip people

around the world with the tools to innovate, test, and scale—more often than not with no direct J-PAL involvement.

[Read more](#)



Photo credit: UM6P

Launching the UM6P-J-PAL Agricultural Lab for Africa in Morocco

With global food insecurity on the rise, improving food production is essential to reducing poverty and promoting livelihoods across Africa. In partnership with the University Mohammed VI Polytechnic (UM6P), J-PAL recently launched the [UM6P-J-PAL Agricultural Lab for Africa \(UJALA\)](#) in Morocco to build partnerships with the private sector and conduct research that rigorously evaluates agricultural technologies and practices designed to increase small-scale farmers' food security, productivity, and profitability in Africa. UJALA will answer critical questions about designing and delivering effective food and agricultural subsidies, assessing the value of fertilizer customization, and connecting farmers to markets, among others. [Read more »](#)

EVIDENCE-INFORMED DECISION MAKING



Photo credit: IRD Global

New case study: Incentives to boost child immunizations in Pakistan

Although vaccines are one of the most effective tools to prevent infectious diseases, childhood immunization rates remain low globally. [Rigorous evidence](#) from Interactive Research & Development Global (IRD) researchers and [Esther Duflo](#) (MIT; Director, J-PAL; Scientific Director, J-PAL South Asia) and J-PAL affiliated professor [Rachel Glennerster](#) (University of Chicago; Co-Chair, J-PAL's Education sector) has shown that small incentives can increase

immunization coverage at a low administrative cost in Pakistan. In the latest Evidence to Policy case study, J-PAL's [Health sector](#) shares how IRD and the Government of Sindh, Pakistan, utilized these findings to inform the scale-up of an immunization incentive program that increased rates and timeliness of routine childhood vaccinations across seven high-risk districts in Sindh. [Read the case study »](#)

FEATURED BLOGS



Photo credit: J-PAL LAC

20 for 20: Transforming the future of work with Arymax Foundation

As J-PAL celebrates its 20th anniversary, the [Jobs and Opportunity Initiative \(JOI\) Brazil](#) enters its third year of funding studies that look into different aspects of the Brazilian labor market. In the latest installment of J-PAL's "20 for 20: Partner Voices" blog series, [J-PAL Latin America and the Caribbean](#) interviewed Vivianne Naigeborin, executive director of the Arymax Foundation, one of the initiative's key partners. Vivianne shares about JOI Brazil and Arymax's evidence-based efforts for productive inclusion and shaping a better future for workers in the country. [Read more »](#)



Photo credit: Lauren Roode, J-PAL

Partnerships to reduce violence in South African schools

School violence in the Western Cape, is a prominent concern for the South African government. In the second blog post in a series on Shukuma, a cognitive behavioral therapy-inspired program to reduce violence in South African schools, [Lauren Roode](#) (Senior Policy Associate, J-PAL Africa) and Ruth Capon (former Project Lead, Western Cape Government's Department of the Premier) highlight the important role of partnerships in piloting Shukuma. [Read more »](#)



Photo credit: GaudiLab, Shutterstock.com

Advice for prospective PhD students from J-PAL's research network and staff

Applying for a PhD program this year (or know someone who is)? Check out two new additions to J-PAL's [blog series](#) offering guidance for prospective PhD students. The first blog post provides advice from J-PAL affiliated professors on essential aspects of the application process, such as showcasing quantitative skills and obtaining credible recommendation letters. The second blog post offers advice from current and recent J-PAL post-docs and staff on factors to consider when choosing which PhD program to attend, including career goals and department culture. Read advice from [J-PAL affiliates](#) and [recent PhDs](#) »

UPDATED POLICY INSIGHT



Photo credit: Daniel Janamah, IPA

Empowering people facing extreme poverty through multifaceted livelihood programs

A significant portion of the global population continues to face insecure and irregular income, an issue that disproportionately affects women. An updated Policy Insight from J-PAL's [Finance sector](#) synthesizes evidence from twenty randomized evaluations focused on multifaceted, Graduation approach livelihood programs, developed by the NGO BRAC, that aim to support people's transition out of extreme poverty. The analysis finds that combining asset transfers, training, financial support, coaching, and health services can lead to substantial and lasting improvements for low-income households. [Read more](#) »

FEATURED RESEARCHER



Participating in mentorship programs is crucial; pairing young scholars with experienced researchers offers significant learning and opportunities to turn research ideas into reality.”



Robertson Khataza on empowering Malawi's economic development through research and mentorship

Robertson Khataza, a lecturer at the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources in Malawi, was recently featured in J-PAL's [African Scholars Spotlight blog series](#). Robertson's research interests span labor markets, women's empowerment, technology adoption, and agriculture. In the blog post, he draws from his personal experience of the development challenges in Malawi to share why he finds development economics to be a rewarding career path. Throughout, he highlights the importance of mentorship in developing research ideas and completing research. [Read more »](#)

WELCOMING OUR NEW AFFILIATED PROFESSORS

In summer 2023, 33 talented researchers joined the J-PAL network. We will feature a few of them here each month.



Susan Dynarski
Harvard University



Tarun Jain
Indian Institute of
Management Ahmedabad



Todd Pugatch
Oregon State University

FEATURED EVENT

[Watch] Partnership Development for Climate Adaptation in Arab States Conference

J-PAL Middle East and North Africa recently co-hosted the Partnership Development for Climate Adaptation in Arab States conference with the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development in Egypt, the National Institute of Governance and Sustainable Development, and the Arab Water Council. Leading up to the 28th Conference of Parties, the event introduced J-PAL's [Air and Water Lab](#) in Egypt and highlighted climate adaptation strategies, focusing on water quality and management, clean energy, agriculture and food security, and education and green skills. Watch the [highlight video](#) or read more on the [J-PAL blog](#) »

FEATURED TRAINING

[December 1] Last chance to enroll in J-PAL 101x: Evaluating Social Programs

J-PAL's free online course on Evaluating Social Programs is open for enrollment until December 1. This self-paced course explores each step in designing a randomized evaluation to rigorously measure the impact of social programs. [Enroll today](#) »

Interested in learning more? On the J-PAL blog, past participants share how they used the online course to strengthen the culture of evidence in their organizations and inform real-world evaluations in the Philippines and Brazil. [Read more](#) »

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

[Testing consumer preferences for automated EV charging and assessing grid impacts](#)
Centre for Net Zero

[J-PAL, UM6P partner to launch agriculture lab in Morocco](#)
Morocco World News

[A girl's struggle for an education](#)
The Fiji Times

[Nathaniel Hendren wants to understand the conditions of opportunity](#)
MIT News

NEW RESEARCH PAPERS

Can Personalized Digital Counseling Improve Consumer Search for Modern Contraceptive Methods?

Susan Athey, Katy Bergstrom, Vitor Hadad, Julian C. Jamison, Berk Özler, Luca Parisotto, and Julius Dohbit Sama

Money or Power? Choosing Covid-19 aid in Kenya

Susanna Berkouwer, Pierre Biscaye, Eric Hsu, Oliver Kim, Kenneth Lee, Edward Miguel, and Catherine Wolfram

The Future in Mind: Aspirations and Long-Term Outcomes in Rural Ethiopia

Tanguy Bernard, Stefan Dercon, Kate Orkin, Giulio Schinaia, and Alemayehu Taffesse

Italy: Tutoring Online Program (TOP): A Successful Global Experience

Michela Carlana, Gaia Gaudenzi, and Eliana La Ferrara

FEATURED JOBS

Associate Director of Policy, Paris, France

Research and Scaling Fellow (Government Partnerships), Mexico City, Mexico

Senior Research and Training Associate (Government Partnerships), São Paulo, Brazil; or Santiago, Chile

Research Associate (Education Project, Morocco Employment Lab), Rabat, Morocco

Senior Policy Associate (State Partnerships), Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

Senior Policy Manager (Environment, Energy, and Climate Change), New Delhi, Delhi, India

Research Manager, Jakarta, Indonesia

Pre-Doctoral Research Fellow/Research Associate, Cambridge, MA, US

Senior Administrative Associate, Cambridge, MA, US

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