J-PAL
ABDUL LATIF JAMEEL POVERTY ACTION LAB

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Announcing the Science for Progress Initiative

As economists we hope to do work that matters. We hold each other to high standards for rigor, while at the same time pursuing relevance: insights that will make a real difference in people's lives. Over the last 20 years J-PAL has epitomized this dual commitment, championing the use of experimental methods across a growing range of applied fields while hosting initiatives that address specific challenges.

One area where this combination of rigor and relevance has proven difficult to achieve is, ironically, in the study of the scientific process itself. Governments and philanthropies invest heavily in supporting scientific research as a public good, but we know too little about how to invest that capital effectively. J-PAL's new Science for Progress Initiative (SfPI), launched with support from Open Philanthropy, Schmidt Futures, and the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, aims to apply randomized evaluation methods to improve how scientific research is conducted, and to develop better science policy. Read more from SfPI co-chairs Paul Niehaus (UC San Diego) and Heidi Williams (Stanford) »

Championing evidence-informed solutions at COP27

Photo: Bryce Vickmark

At COP27 in Sharm-El-Sheikh, Egypt from November 6-18, J-PAL affiliates and staff will participate on several panels to share the lastest policy insights from rigorous research on climate solutions, and will host meetings with government and implementing partners to discuss the adaptation and scaling of evidence-based policies across geographic contexts.

Earlier, as part of the World Bank's Road to COP27 Webinar Series, Esther Duflo (MIT; Director, J-PAL; Scientific Director, J-PAL South Asia) gave a talk on October 12 about the urgent need to increase funding for adaptation measures to protect vulnerable populations from climate shocks, as well as the importance of using rigorous evidence to guide climate policy. In a follow-up Q&A with Mahmoud Mohieldin, (UN Climate Change High-Level Champion for COP27), Esther highlighted the close relationship between combating inequality and mitigating greenhouse gas emissions. Watch Esther's talk »

FEATURED MULTIMEDIA

Photo: J-PAL

Video: A vision for effective and equitable climate action

J-PAL's King Climate Action Initiative (K-CAI) is dedicated to finding and scaling evidence-informed solutions at the nexus of climate change and poverty alleviation. In a new video, Abhijit Banerjee (MIT; Director, J-PAL; Scientific Director, J-PAL Europe) and K-CAI co-chair Kelsey Jack (UC Santa Barbara) discuss their vision for climate action and share how K-CAI is working to achieve this goal. Watch the video »

FEATURED BLOGS

Addressing maternal health crises in North America

Photo: Shutterstock.com

The United States is facing a crisis in maternal and newborn health. Disparities in access to maternal care services, lack of guaranteed paid maternity leave, and limited access to home visits all contribute to maternal deaths that are often preventable. A new blog post by researchers Jessica Cohen (Harvard) and Maggie McConnell (Harvard), alongside staff from the Health Care Delivery Initiative, highlights the importance of randomized evaluations in maternal health and discusses future research generation in collaboration with social scientists, clinicians, and policymakers to meet the urgent need for systemic, equitable change. Read more »

Photo: Stephen Reich | Shutterstock.com

Preservation strategies for the Amazon rainforest

The Amazon rainforest, spread across nine countries in Latin America, plays an essential role in maintaining environmental and climate stability worldwide. How can randomized evaluations shed light on which policies are the most effective in reducing its deforestation? Our latest blog post from J-PAL Latin America and the Caribbean outlines open policy questions on effective conservation. Read more »

FEATURED POLICY INSIGHT

Photo: Shutterstock.com

Encouraging firms to formalize in low- and middle-income countries

Informal firms represent more than 70 percent of employment in low- and middle-income countries, but may have less access than formally registered firms to financial services, business loans, and emergency relief such as those delivered by governments around the world during the COVID-19 pandemic. In a new Policy Insight, J-PAL's Firms sector synthesizes evidence from seven randomized evaluations and four quasi-experimental studies examining interventions

that aimed to encourage formalization. Providing information about the benefits of registration and removing upfront costs were not successful in promoting business registration. Additional positive or negative incentives, however, such as cash grants and stricter enforcement of existing regulations, showed more promise. Read more »

FEATURED RESEARCHER

Photo: Courtesty of Dr. Monica Lambon-Quayefio

African Scholar Spotlight: Monica Lambon-Quayefio

J-PAL is publishing a blog series through 2023 highlighting the work of economists based in Africa. In the newest African Scholar Spotlight, Monica Lambon-Quayefio (University of Ghana) discusses her research on agriculture, women's empowerment, and climate change. She also shares her perspectives on how organizations can build on the support they provide to African researchers, as well as advice for aspiring scholars considering a career in economic research. Read more »

WELCOMING OUR NEW AFFILIATED PROFESSORS

In summer 2022, 33 talented researchers joined the J-PAL network. We will feature a few of them here each month.

Emanuele Colonnelli
University of Chicago

Reshmaan N. Hussam
Harvard Business School

Andrew Zeitlin
Georgetown University

FEATURED EVENTS

[November 28] Experimental research for education: Launching the Innovation, Data and Experiments for Action Program

The Innovation, Data and Experiments in Education program, a collaborative initiative with the French government to develop evidence-based education policy in France, will host its public launch event on November 28 in partnership with the French Ministry of Education. The event will bring together key stakeholders from research, policy, and practice to discuss the value of randomized evaluations in education within the French context. Keynote speakers include Pap Ndiaye (Minister of Education, France) and Esther Duflo (MIT; Director, J-PAL; Scientific Director, J-PAL South Asia). Read more »

[November 29] Labor market policies in Brazil: Research on job training programs

J-PAL Latin America and the Caribbean and the Inter-American Development Bank will hold a webinar in Portuguese on November 29 to launch a new series of publications, "Evidence on Labor Market Policies and Implications for Brazil." The series is part of an effort from the Jobs and Opportunity Initiative Brazil to inform policy debates related to labor markets in Brazil. The event will focus on evidence on job training and showcase an evaluation by Daniel da Mata (Sao Paulo School of Economics) regarding a high-dosage job training program in Brazil. Register »

[Seminar recap] The Road to COP27: Tackling climate change in Egypt

J-PAL Middle East and North Africa at the American University in Cairo co-hosted a seminar with UNICEF Egypt on September 29, featuring Mahmoud Mohieldin (Senior Vice President for the 2030 Development Agenda, World Bank Group), Ali Abo Sena (CEO, Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency), and Kyle Emerick (Tufts University). The panel brought policymaker, academic, and development practitioner perspectives into the discussion, fostering a conversation between Egypt's climate priorities and the relevant global evidence. In dialogue, panelists emphasized the importance of evidence-based solutions in combating climate change and ensuring that climate financing and resources are effectively allocated in the Egyptian context. Read more »

[Training recap] J-PAL and IPA's October Research Staff Training

Over two weeks in October, J-PAL and IPA jointly hosted a virtual Research Staff Training. The training welcomed 70 participants from 11 countries, including J-PAL and IPA staff, research associates for J-PAL and IPA affiliated researchers, and staff from partner institutions. Participants learned skills necessary for conducting randomized evaluations, with sessions dedicated to research ethics, survey design, working with administrative data, project management, data visualization, and more. Read more »

FEATURED TRAININGS

Enroll in J-PAL 101x: Evaluating Social Programs

J-PAL's recently updated online course on Evaluating Social Programs is now open for enrollment and will begin on November 15. This free, self-paced course explores each step in designing a randomized evaluation, from developing a theory of change and conducting the randomization process to navigating design challenges and ethical considerations. Through lectures led by J-PAL affiliated professors and case studies using real-world examples, participants will gain an understanding of both technical design aspects and practical considerations for measuring impact with a randomized evaluation. Join a community of learners around the world who are interested in learning how rigorous evaluation and evidence can ensure their organizations' programs have the intended impact. Enroll in the course »

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

On-the-ground research must guide climate adaptation investments [Opinion]
Ahram Online

MIT Professor says the pandemic exposed the need to update U.S. government technology
NPR

Economist Chris Blattman has reshaped our understanding of violence and poverty
Vox

Development programs don't always work. Rachel Glennerster figures out how and why.
Vox

Economics is more than just theory for Seema Jayachandran — it's a way to help people
Vox

Ahmed Mushfiq Mobarak wants to find out what makes antipoverty programs effective
Vox

NEW RESEARCH PAPERS

Land Rental Markets: Experimental Evidence from Kenya
Michelle Acampora, Lorenzo Casaburi, and Jack Willis

The (Lack of) Anticipatory Effects of the Social Safety Net on Human Capital Investment
Manasi Deshpande and Rebecca Dizon-Ross

Poor and Rational: Decision-Making under Scarcity
Dietmar Fehr, Günther Fink, and Kelsey Jack

Persuading Voters to Punish Corrupt Vote-Buying Candidates: Experimental Evidence from a Large-Scale Radio Campaign in India
Laura Schechter and Srinivasan Vasudevan

FEATURED JOBS

Research and Policy Manager - LISER, Paris, France
Senior Research Associate - IDEE, Paris, France
Policy Manager, Jakarta, Indonesia
Postdoctoral Fellow - IFII, Jakarta, Indonesia
Research Associate, Jakarta, Indonesia
Senior Finance & Operations Associate, Jakarta, Indonesia
Senior Human Resources Manager, Cambridge, MA, US
Senior Development Associate, Cambridge, MA, US

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