J-PAL Urban Services Initiative
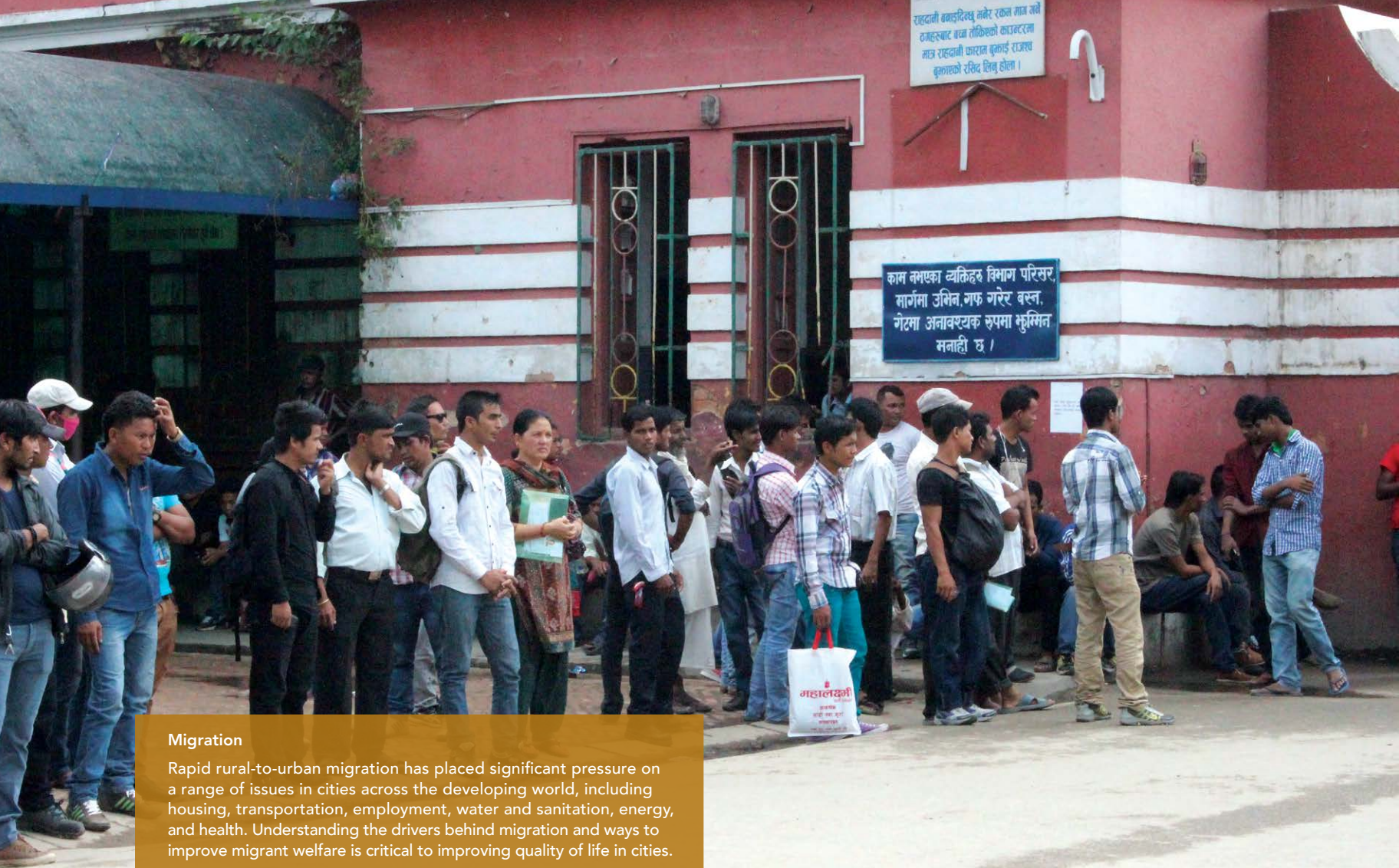## Partnership Development Conference

2–4 NOVEMBER 2014 · KATHMANDU, NEPAL

ABDUL LATIF JAMEEL
Poverty Action Lab

राहदानी बनाउँदिछ नमेर रकम माग गर्ने
ठगहरूबाट बच्न तोकिएको काउन्टरमा
मात्र राहदानी फाराम बुझाई राजस्व
बुझाएको रसिद लिनु होला ।

काम नभएका व्यक्तिहरू विभाग परिसर,
मार्गमा उभिन, गफ गरेर बस्न,
गेटमा अनावश्यक रूपमा भूस्मिन
मनाही छ ।

Migration

Rapid rural-to-urban migration has placed significant pressure on
a range of issues in cities across the developing world, including
housing, transportation, employment, water and sanitation, energy,
and health. Understanding the drivers behind migration and ways to
improve migrant welfare is critical to improving quality of life in cities.

Welcome

WE WARMLY WELCOME YOU to the 2014 Urban Services Initiative Partnership Development Conference, hosted by the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL).

Over the next three days, we hope to provide a creative environment in which researchers and practitioners can come together to engage in thoughtful discussion on issues critical to the welfare of the urban poor in Asia with the aim of establishing new partnerships that identify and evaluate innovative interventions designed to address these issues.

If you are a practitioner, we hope that this conference will help you explore ways in which to integrate existing and new research into your organization. If you are a researcher, we hope that you will find an organization with which to initiate exciting new research. We look forward to a productive conference that helps generate new rigorous impact evaluations that, in turn, lead to policies and programs that improve the lives of the urban poor.

Best regards,

Esther Duflo
Sebastian Galiani
Mushfiq Mobarak
Co-Chairs, Urban Services Initiative

About USI

IN THE LAST THREE DECADES, growth in the urban population in developing countries exceeded that of the rural population three-fold, due in large part to an unprecedented level of in-migration of people from rural areas. In many cities, investment has not kept pace with massive population growth, leading to rapid and unplanned urbanization and infrastructure and services stressed beyond capacity. Cities have consequently become the site where an increasing proportion of the poor reside. This phenomenon, known as the "urbanization of poverty," presents a unique set of development challenges that requires rigorous testing of novel solutions that seek to improve urban services.

The Urban Services Initiative (USI), managed by J-PAL and funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, seeks to identify and rigorously evaluate innovative interventions designed to improve the welfare of the urban poor in Asia and Africa. USI encompasses a broad range of issues, including water, sanitation, and hygiene; livelihoods, migration and migrant welfare; energy and the environment; transportation; housing and infrastructure; and the delivery of health and education services.

For all of the issues identified above, USI aims to understand and address important barriers to the urban poor's access to needed services, including collective action failures, political economy and public finance constraints, low willingness to pay for services, institutional and legal constraints, and difficulties arising from the presence of a mix of transient and permanent populations.

The main objectives of the initiative are to:

Spur innovative micro- and medium-scale solutions that address the challenges of delivering urban public services and use randomized evaluations to test the effectiveness of these innovations in the field;

Form strong, multidisciplinary research teams, which includes building the capacity of researchers based in developing countries to design and conduct randomized evaluations that test the effectiveness of their proposed solutions; and

Disseminate knowledge gained to policymakers and donors at local, national, and international levels so that effective solutions are promoted and scaled up.

To learn more, please visit the USI website www.povertyactionlab.org/usi.

Housing and Infrastructure

Massive population growth in cities accompanied by insufficient public investments has resulted in a shortage of secure housing and adequate, safe physical infrastructure. Millions of people now live in slums with insecure property rights that could weaken incentives for residents to make long-term capital investments. More research is needed on the effects of land titling on infrastructure investments and optimal ways to provide property rights.

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

The consequences of poor hygiene and inadequate access to safe water and sanitation is particularly acute in densely populated cities. However, surprisingly little rigorous evidence exists on interventions that effectively and sustainably improve access to these services, thereby necessitating novel approaches that require rigorous testing.

About the USI Partnership Development Conference

THE 2014 USI PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE is designed to forge partnerships between researchers and implementing agencies to evaluate development programs through use of randomized evaluations. The conference includes presentations by researchers and sector experts on important open questions about urban service delivery, as well as a series of iterative break-out sessions in which researchers and practitioners who share similar thematic interests can discuss and map out opportunities for collaboration. Through the break-out sessions, organizations will receive structured guidance from academic experts on how to build randomized evaluations into the design and execution of their specific programs.

By means of this structured interaction, we hope that the conference will help pair leading economists with government and nongovernmental organisations that have implementation capacity to identify and test innovative solutions to a range of urban issues across Asia. The teams of researchers and practitioners formed during this conference can then compete for funding through a Request for Proposals (RFP) that USI issues at regular intervals.

Research funding comes in two categories:

Pilot funding supports projects in their infancy, in which researchers and practitioners define clear research questions and logistics for full-scale research projects. Pilot studies can be qualitative or quantitative in nature, and can serve as a diagnostic to reveal barriers to the delivery of effective, quality urban services. Proposals can also be designed to test the potential profitability of a technology under "real world" conditions, the efficacy of an intervention or an evaluation design, to acquire pilot data, and/or to pilot a project in the same form in which it would be scaled if successful.

Full research grants are awarded to projects at a more mature stage of development and that implement interventions with a robust, feasible randomization design and well-defined data collection instruments.

Transportation

Many cities across the developing world suffer from congestion and very high levels of air pollution due to inadequate provision of clean, affordable, efficient, and safe transportation. Finding innovative ways of solving transportation problems is critical to improving health, the environment, and overall quality of life.

About J-PAL

THE ABDUL LATIF JAMEEL POVERTY ACTION LAB (J-PAL) was established in 2003 as a research center at the Economics Department at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Since then, it has grown into a global network of over one hundred researchers who use randomized evaluations to answer critical policy questions in the fight against poverty.

J-PAL's mission is to reduce poverty by ensuring that policy is informed by scientific evidence. We do this through three main activities:

Conducting Rigorous Impact Evaluations J-PAL affiliates conduct randomized evaluations to test and improve the effectiveness of programs and policies aimed at reducing poverty. Our work spans several program areas: agriculture, crime, education, environment and energy, finance and microfinance, governance, health, and labor markets and youth.

Policy Outreach J-PAL's policy group analyzes and disseminates research results, and builds partnerships with policymakers to ensure policy is driven by evidence, and effective programs are scaled up.

Capacity Building J-PAL equips practitioners with the expertise to carry out their own rigorous evaluations through training courses and joint research projects.

In addition to our Global office at MIT in Cambridge, USA, J-PAL has regional centers in **Africa** at the University of Cape Town (Cape Town, South Africa); **Europe** at the Paris School of Economics (Paris, France); **Latin America and the Caribbean** at Pontificia Universidad Católica (Santiago, C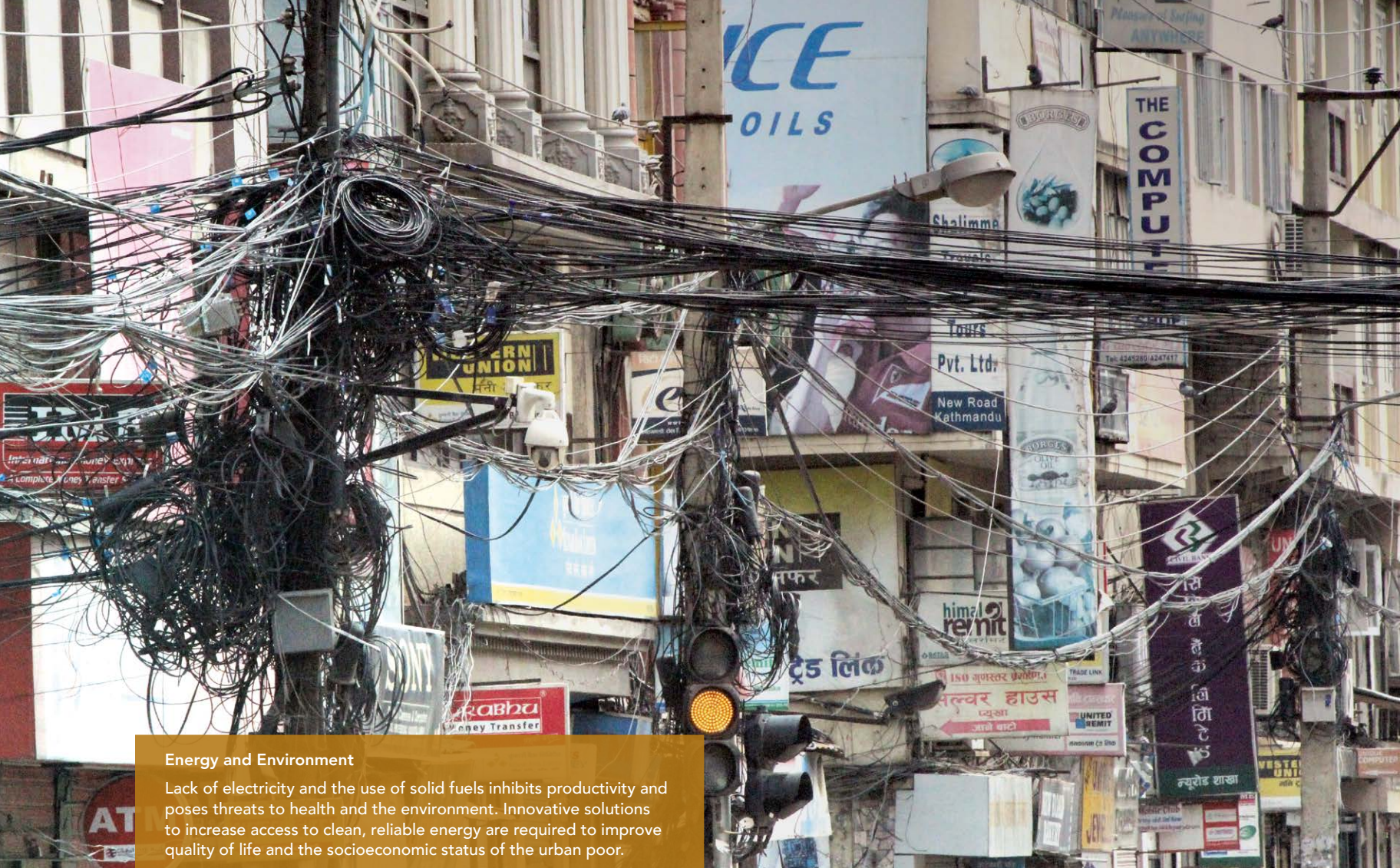hile); **North America** at MIT (Cambridge); **South Asia** at the Institute for Financial Management Research (Chennai, India); and **Southeast Asia** at the University of Indonesia (Jakarta, Indonesia). J-PAL's regional offices coordinate evaluations of development programs and actively work in capacity building and policy outreach.

J-PAL EUROPE
Paris School of Economics
in Paris, France

**J-PAL GLOBAL &
J-PAL NORTH AMERICA**
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
in Cambridge, USA

J-PAL SOUTH ASIA
Institute for Financial
Management Research
in Chennai and Delhi, India

**J-PAL LATIN AMERICA
& THE CARIBBEAN**
Pontificia Universidad Católica
in Santiago, Chile

**J-PAL
SOUTHEAST ASIA**
University of Indonesia
in Jakarta, Indonesia

J-PAL AFRICA
University of Cape Town
in Cape Town, South Africa

Energy and Environment

Lack of electricity and the use of solid fuels inhibits productivity and poses threats to health and the environment. Innovative solutions to increase access to clean, reliable energy are required to improve quality of life and the socioeconomic status of the urban poor.

About J-PAL South Asia

J-PAL SOUTH ASIA (J-PAL SA) is based at the Institute for Financial Management and Research (IFMR) in Chennai, and has close to one hundred employees. J-PAL SA's senior management, policy, and capacity building teams are based in Delhi and its research teams operate out of seven project offices across India.

J-PAL SA works in close partnership with state governments, NGOs, foundations, and international development organizations. Its mission encompasses:

Evaluating Social Programs J-PAL SA's research portfolio comprises more than ninety ongoing and completed evaluation projects in South Asia across seven research themes: agriculture, education, environment and energy, finance and microfinance, governance, health, and labor markets and youth. These programs cover both urban and rural regions.

Achieving Policy Impact J-PAL works to scale up proven and effective programs. With more than ninety evaluations to draw from in South Asia and 550 across the globe, J-PAL SA is well positioned to share evidence on programs that work, those that do not, and why. J-PAL SA's policy team strives to ensure that the growing body of evidence from around the world can be effectively used to inform policy and improve the lives of the poor in South Asia.

Building Local Capacity Since 2005, J-PAL SA trained more than two thousand members of central and state governments, NGOs, academic, and multilateral organizations in conducting rigorous impact evaluations. J-PAL SA at IFMR hosts the regional center for the Centers for Learning on Evaluation and Results (CLEAR) in South Asia. CLEAR is a global initiative coordinated by the World Bank and aims to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation capacity of governments and civil society through training and advisory services. Under CLEAR, J-PAL SA conducts a range of capacity-building efforts, including demand-driven training and advisory services, and the development of topical materials for practitioners, policymakers, and frontline workers.

Why Randomize?

IT IS NOT ALWAYS OBVIOUS which policy will have the largest impact on intended beneficiaries: What is the best way to increase school participation—incentives for parents, information on returns to schooling, or school inputs? Do job training programs increase employment and income for unemployed youth? What is the most cost-effective way of improving learning in schools?

To design good policy, we need to know how well a policy is working and whether it is a good value for the money. Random assignment offers a simple way to generate these insights. In randomized evaluations, individuals are selected to receive a program based on a lottery. Those individuals who are not selected form a comparison group. Because the selection process is random, the two groups are similar in every respect, except that one group receives the program, while the other does not.

Therefore if, after the program is implemented, the group that received the program has different outcomes (e.g., is more or less healthy, or has higher or lower test scores), we know that this difference was caused by the program. This clear attribution of which effects were caused by the program gives us insights about its effectiveness.

Randomized evaluations are particularly appropriate when programs are oversubscribed, scheduled to be rolled out in a gradual fashion, or are initially tested with pilot programs. In those cases, randomization is one of the fairest ways of determining participation, while simultaneously allowing for rigorous measurement of the effect.

Health and Education Services

Health and education services are critical inputs to human capital formation, economic growth, and a skilled and productive urban labor force. More research is needed on how to address the uniquely urban challenges in the delivery of these services.

ABDUL LATIF JAMEEL

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TRANSLATING RESEARCH INTO ACTION