



ANNUAL REPORT 2018
AND A LOOK AHEAD TO 2019



J-PAL
ABDUL LATIF JAMEEL POVERTY ACTION LAB



ABOUT J-PAL

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 170 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, North America, South Asia, and Southeast Asia.

PHOTO: LISA CORSETTO | J-PAL
COVER PHOTO: TOM GILKS | J-PAL/IPA

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In 2018 we marked an important milestone at J-PAL: Fifteen years of reducing poverty by ensuring that policy is informed by scientific evidence.

What does this mean in practice? With the support of our funding and implementing partners, we have conducted rigorous research to find solutions to some of the greatest challenges in development and social policy. Our incredibly committed staff have worked tirelessly with our affiliated professors to take this research beyond academic journals and put in the hands of decision-makers, helping governments, NGOs, and donors make better, more informed decisions. And we've seen incredible global progress: **More than 400 million people have been reached by programs that were scaled up after being evaluated by our affiliated researchers.**

We achieved a number of ambitious goals in 2018:

- We launched two **new exciting sectors**—Gender and Firms—to synthesize existing evidence and spur new research on highly relevant questions, such as how gender norms affect the outcomes of social programs and how growth in the private sector affects worker wellbeing, the environment, and the economy.
- We announced **two new research initiatives**: at our Europe office, the European Social Inclusion Initiative is focused on programs affecting migrants and refugees; and at our North America office, the Education, Technology, and Opportunity Initiative is focused on educational innovation.
- We launched numerous **new government partnerships to scale up effective programs** to reach many more people. Our Africa office partnership focused on the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach that helps students catch up to their grade level in Côte d'Ivoire and other African countries; our South Asia office focused on the Graduation approach that equips people to lift themselves out of poverty in Bihar state, and our Southeast Asia office led a series of workshops and a high-level conference with Indonesia's Ministry of National Development Planning.
- We kicked off a **new Middle East and North Africa regional partnership** with the American University in Cairo that will facilitate crucial research, policy, and capacity building work in Egypt, expanding our reach in the region.
- We **opened admissions for a new blended master's degree in Data, Economics, and Development Policy** that combines online and in-person classes at MIT's Department of Economics to train students from around the world in the skills needed to create social and economic change.
- We launched a **new Evidence to Policy section on our website** featuring seventeen (and counting) case studies that highlight the many ways in which randomized evaluations influence policy and practice.
- We created a **new Policy Insights library on our website** that provides short summaries of lessons from multiple studies, helping decision-makers access relevant evidence and key recommendations that serve as practical inputs for policy and program design.
- We **published papers to share knowledge in specific areas of research and policy**. "Creating a Culture of Evidence Use," written in collaboration with our Latin America & the Caribbean office, details lessons in strengthening partnerships to encourage evidence-informed policy in governments. And "A Practical Guide to Measuring Women's and Girls' Empowerment in Impact Evaluations" has been downloaded by thousands and offers guidance for evaluators, researchers, and students examining gender and empowerment outcomes.
- We welcomed **a dozen new affiliated professors** from eleven universities to our expanding network of 170+ amazingly talented researchers. Our affiliates began **124 new impact evaluations** that will add to the existing body of rigorous evidence on what works and what doesn't in the fight to end poverty.



Members of J-PAL's leadership team.

Back row, left to right: David Sears, Benjamin Olken, Iqbal Dhaliwal, Anna Schrimpf, Anja Sautmann, Abhijit Banerjee, Laura Poswell.
Front row, left to right: Shobhini Mukerji, Lina Marliani, Paula Pedro, Esther Duflo, Mary Ann Bates with Abigail, Hélène Giacobino, John Floretta.

J-PAL's vision remains the same: greater use of data and rigorous evidence in decision-making. Toward that vision, we look forward to what 2019 holds for us.

- We will launch a very ambitious partnership with Co-Impact to greatly scale up Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) across a number of African countries.
- We will **enable innovative research to fill critical gaps in knowledge** through research initiatives at our regional offices and the ten sector programs, including existing sectors like Environment & Energy; Crime, Violence, & Conflict; and Labor Markets; as well as the new Firms and Gender sectors.
- We will relaunch our Government Partnership Initiative as the **Innovation in Government Initiative (IGI)**, representing renewed efforts to scale up effective programs to reach more people.
- We hope to launch a new **Innovations in Data and Experiments for Action (IDEA)** Initiative to help researchers and data providers access and analyze large administrative datasets to inform real time and highly policy relevant decision-making.
- We are **building the next generation of evidence-driven leaders** through custom courses run by our regional offices and an expanding suite of online education in hard-to-reach places like refugee camps.

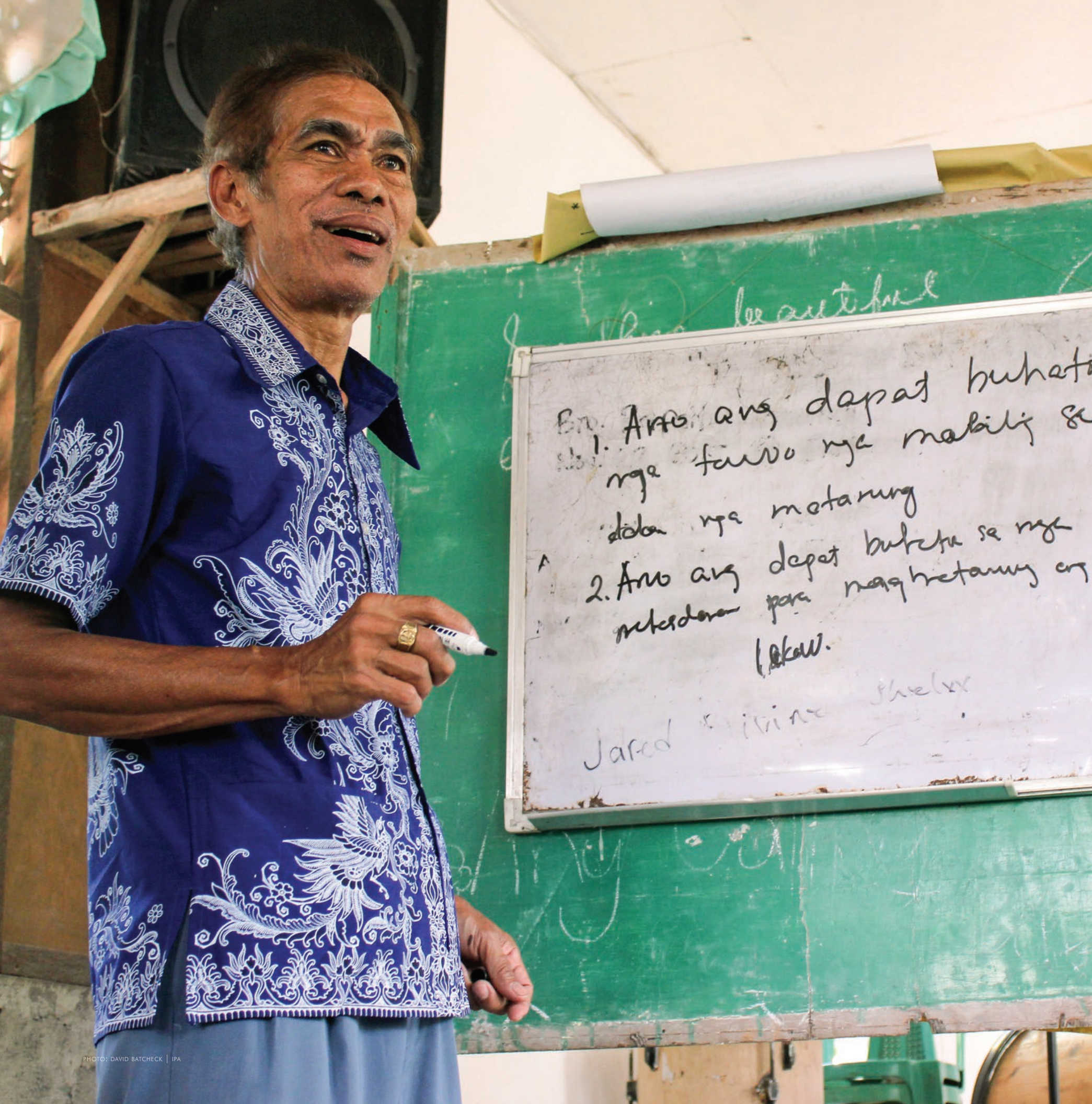
Everything we have achieved at J-PAL is due to the support of our incredible partners, affiliates, and staff: Our funding partners provide the vision and resources that allow us to grow and expand our work, our implementing partners put faith in us to evaluate and learn from pilot programs before scaling up, and the creativity of our affiliated professors pushes us into new research frontiers. Our staff based in dozen countries are the unsung heroes of J-PAL, demonstrating extraordinary hard work and commitment every day to support our work in communications, education, finance, operations, policy, research, and training.

At J-PAL, we believe that rigorous evidence can help inform decisions—from rural communities to the halls of government offices—that improve people's lives. Thank you for being part of this exciting journey.

Iqbal Dhaliwal

Iqbal Dhaliwal
J-PAL Executive Director

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RESEARCH

At J-PAL, we believe investing in rigorous research is essential to finding solutions to the world's greatest challenges. Working with implementing partners, J-PAL's affiliated professors conduct randomized impact evaluations to test and improve the effectiveness of social programs.

J-PAL affiliates have led more than 850 randomized evaluations in 80 countries across a diverse range of topics, from clean water to microfinance to crime prevention.

RESEARCH

SUPPORTING NEW RESEARCH PROJECTS ON UNDER-STUDIED TOPICS TO ANSWER URGENT POLICY QUESTIONS

J-PAL affiliates launched 124 new research studies in 2018. These studies are carefully designed to have maximum policy and research relevance, informing decisions being made in communities, governments, and international institutions while also advancing the knowledge base in the fight against poverty.

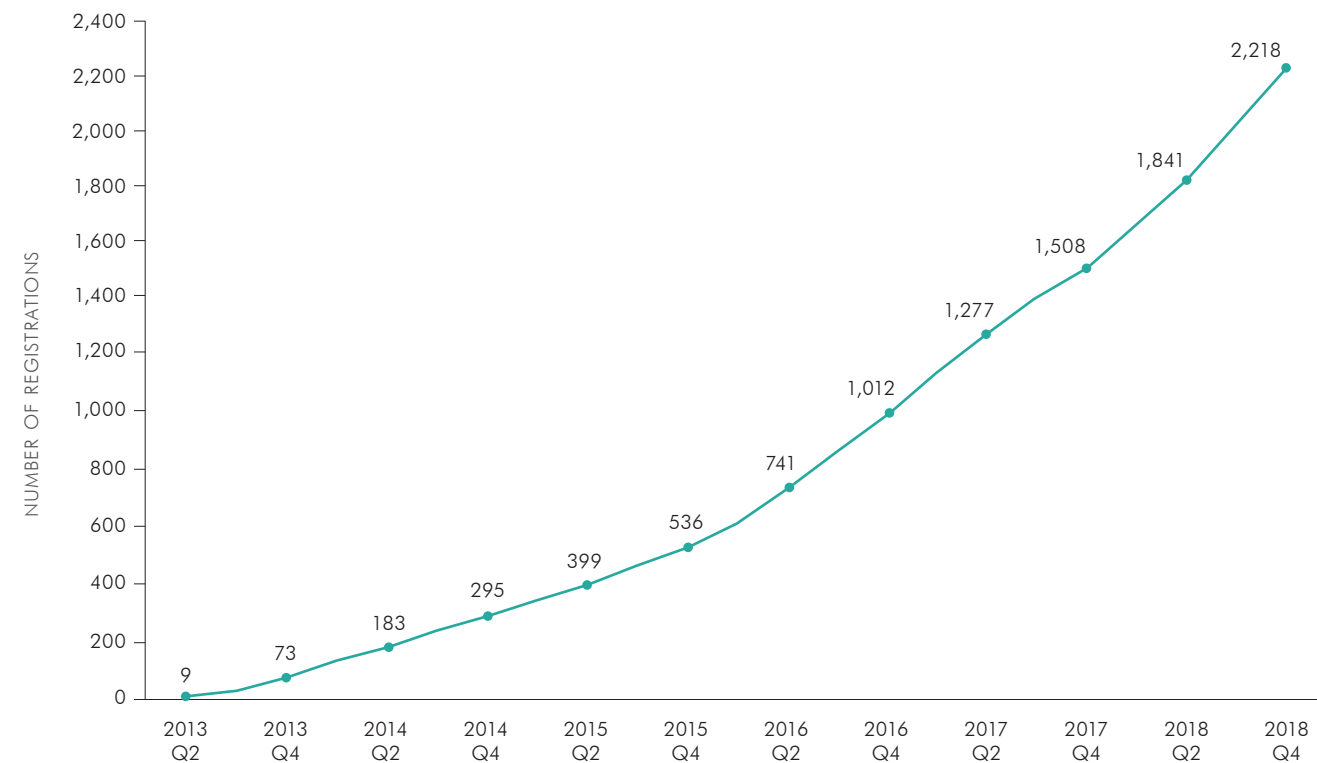
New studies in 2018 include a partnership with the City of Cape Town, South Africa to evaluate a program designed to improve electricity access for low-income households; a partnership with the European Union to evaluate a program to foster tolerance and inclusion in French communities affected by migration; and a partnership with local NGOs in Egypt to evaluate an innovative entrepreneurship program.

INCREASING RESEARCH TRANSPARENCY

J-PAL has played a key role in promoting online registration of randomized evaluations, in part by creating tools for researchers to register their evaluations and dedicating staff to manage the American Economic Association's Registry for Randomized Controlled Trials. More than 2,000 evaluations have been added to the registry since its launch in 2012 (figure 1). This increased transparency enables researchers and members of the public to learn about evaluations that are not yet (or ever) published, and to access data that feeds into future research.

J-PAL makes data even more accessible by helping our affiliates publish data from randomized evaluations—more than 214 datasets to date. By making this data available for public use, we facilitate rigorous external analysis and create potential for new discoveries.

FIGURE 1. CUMULATIVE AMERICAN ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION REGISTRATIONS OVER TIME





SECTOR PROGRAMS

In 2018 J-PAL met demand for rigorous research and policy insights by launching two new sectors at the forefront of current policy debates.

SECTOR PROGRAMS



GENDER

In March 2018 J-PAL announced the launch of a new sector area of focus: Gender, chaired by affiliate Seema Jayachandran of Northwestern University. The new sector represents a concerted and long-term effort to better understand how gender norms and inequalities affect women, men, girls, and boys, particularly related to economic opportunities and growth. The new sector has four primary goals:

1. Develop an in-depth understanding of the impacts of policies and programs that seek to empower women and girls, and of programs that see different impacts across genders.
2. Create practical tools for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers to better incorporate analysis of gender dynamics and impacts into ongoing research.
3. Work with funders, governments, and NGOs to launch new randomized evaluations that generate policy-relevant evidence related to gender.
4. Produce new policy lessons focused on gender equity and build partnerships with governments and NGOs to put this evidence into practice.

FIRMS

In September 2018 J-PAL announced the launch of the Firms sector, co-chaired by affiliates David Atkin of MIT and Nicholas Bloom of Stanford University. There are large productivity gaps between private sector firms in higher-income and lower-income countries that limit economic growth. Identifying policies that are effective in stimulating productivity growth can have important consequences for poverty alleviation, worker welfare, and social mobility. The goals of the new sector include:

1. Engage large firms and multinational enterprises to better understand current practices aimed at raising productivity, with the potential to identify new programs and priorities for intervention designs.
2. Work with private sector firms, governments, and regulatory agencies to launch new randomized evaluations that generate policy-relevant evidence.
3. Produce new policy lessons focused on the links between firm growth and poverty alleviation and build partnerships with governments and firms to put this evidence into practice.



PUBLICATION HIGHLIGHT

The Gender sector's first publication, "A Practical Guide to Measuring Women's and Girl's Empowerment." This guide gathers insights from the experiences of J-PAL affiliated professors around the world and offers practical tips and tools for researchers seeking to incorporate measurement of gender impacts into their work, including a detailed 140-page appendix with sample survey questions and focus group exercises.



POLICY ENGAGEMENT

J-PAL translates research into action, promoting a culture of evidence-informed policymaking around the world. Our policy analysis and outreach help governments, NGOs, donors, and the private sector apply evidence from randomized evaluations to their work and contribute to public discourse around some of the most pressing questions in social policy and international development.

POLICY ENGAGEMENT



PHOTO: ANTON SCHOLTZ | J-PAL

REGIONAL SNAPSHOTS

Expanding Teaching at the Right Level

Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL), an educational approach pioneered by Pratham, an India-based NGO, has been proven through J-PAL affiliates' impact evaluations to improve children's learning across many different settings. **J-PAL Africa** and Pratham supported the Government of Zambia in scaling TaRL to 500 schools and trained local leaders to bring it to 1,000 schools in 2019. The team, together with **J-PAL Europe**, deepened its TaRL partnerships across Africa, including in Botswana, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, and Uganda.

Contributing to policy agendas in Europe

In June 2018 **J-PAL Europe** co-hosted a high-level meeting for policymakers and journalists at the French National Assembly highlighting the importance of evidence-based policy, featuring keynote remarks from J-PAL co-founder Esther Duflo. J-PAL also launched the European Social Inclusion Initiative to support research and policy outreach related to migrant and refugee inclusion—a topic that despite being a pressing issue in Europe today remains under-researched.

Supporting institutions in Latin America

J-PAL Latin America & the Caribbean (LAC) partnered with Argentina's Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology to establish an Innovation and Evaluation Hub in the province of Salta, designed to identify educational innovations that can be rigorously evaluated using data from a national census-based assessment. In Ecuador, J-PAL LAC partnered with the Ministry of the Interior to embed staff to identify opportunities for rigorous impact evaluations.

Answering important policy questions in North America

Through our inaugural Education, Technology, and Opportunity Innovation Competition, **J-PAL North America** launched partnerships with two leading education technology nonprofits to test models designed to improve student learning, particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. More than two dozen local governments applied for J-PAL support through J-PAL's State and Local Innovation Initiative, and among them three were selected: The California Franchise Tax Board, the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority, and the New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee will partner with J-PAL North America staff and affiliated researchers to evaluate promising policy solutions.



PHOTO: MARJOLAINE ROLAND COURONNES | J-PAL



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Taking programs to scale in South Asia

Following close engagement with **J-PAL South Asia** and its partners, the Government of Bihar, India announced the scale-up of the Graduation approach, a holistic program designed to help families lift themselves out of extreme poverty. The government pledged US\$120 million to scale the program to 100,000 families in Bihar over the next three years.

Providing high-level policy guidance in Southeast Asia

J-PAL Southeast Asia strengthened its longstanding partnership with Indonesia's Ministry of National Development Planning in 2018, hosting workshops for government officials on key findings from impact evaluations. A high-level conference in Jakarta brought together leading policymakers, academics, and representatives from donor agencies, NGOs, and the private sector to discuss effective approaches to reduce childhood stunting.

SYSTEMS-LEVEL CHANGE

Tamil Nadu, India: With support from J-PAL's Government Partnership Initiative, the state of Tamil Nadu in India issued new guidelines in 2018 requiring that impact evaluations be conducted for all programs in sectors of strategic importance in which the total program budget exceeds US\$22 million. The state's planning department created a dedicated US\$1.5 million fund for program evaluation. Staff from J-PAL South Asia provide ongoing capacity-building support to a cutting-edge data analytics unit to enable the government to make data-driven decisions in real time.

LAUNCHING NEW HIGH-LEVEL PARTNERSHIPS TO REACH MILLIONS MORE PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD

J-PAL's Government Partnership Initiative (GPI) launched in 2015 to build and strengthen partnerships between governments, J-PAL affiliated researchers, and J-PAL regional offices to increase the use of evidence in policymaking. In 2019, GPI will re-launch as the Innovation in Government Initiative (IGI), representing renewed efforts to scale up effective programs to reach more people.

The initiative supports partnerships to:

1. Design and evaluate innovative government policies and programs;
2. Scale up policies already evaluated and found to be effective; and
3. Institutionalize the use of evidence in policy.

By funding a wide range of research, capacity building, and policy outreach, GPI (now IGI) aims to break down barriers to enable partnerships that deliver results.

Since its inception, GPI has created partnerships in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Kenya, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Peru, the Philippines, Sierra Leone, the United States, and Zambia. In a number of cases, relatively small investments in partnerships between researchers and governments have led to large-scale policy change.

Over the course of 2018 GPI shifted its focus from grantmaking to learning, conducting more than forty interviews across dozens of government agencies in Latin America to develop a flagship report, "Creating a Culture of Evidence Use in Latin America." Published in December, the report outlines key lessons to inform future partnerships.



PHOTO: BOGOTÁ MAYOR'S OFFICE

POLICY ENGAGEMENT: POLICY INSIGHTS



PHOTO: KYLE MURPHY J-PAL

HELPING DECISION-MAKERS ACCESS THE MOST IMPORTANT LESSONS EMERGING FROM RIGOROUS RESEARCH

In 2018 J-PAL created a new online resource called **Policy Insights** to help decision-makers more easily access overarching policy lessons from a body of rigorous research.

Each of the seventeen (and counting) Policy Insights highlight key policy recommendations emerging from multiple randomized evaluations on the same topic, from microcredit loans to farmer productivity to crime prevention. When combined with a detailed understanding of context and program implementation, these insights serve as practical inputs for policy and program design.

2018 WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA BY THE NUMBERS

663
Total evaluation summaries on J-PAL's website

59
New evaluation summaries on J-PAL's website

17
New Policy Insights

52
New J-PAL blog posts

21,149
Monthly newsletter followers (23% increase from 2017)

35,633
Twitter followers (27% increase from 2017)

19,687
Facebook followers (12% increase from 2017)

POLICY ENGAGEMENT: POLICY INSIGHTS PUBLISHED IN 2018

-  The impact of price on take-up and use of preventive health products (Health)
-  Improving extension services to increase smallholder farmers' productivity (Agriculture)
-  The limited impact of credit on smallholder farmers' profitability (Agriculture, Finance)
-  Protecting farmers from weather-based risk (Agriculture)
-  Reducing costs to increase school participation (Education)
-  Increasing student enrollment and attendance by making education benefits salient and changing perceptions (Education)
-  Increasing student enrollment and attendance: Impacts by gender (Education, Gender)
-  Increasing access to college by making the application process easier (Education)
-  Charter schools and student learning (Education)
-  Improving learning by increasing motivation, targeting instruction, and addressing school governance (Education)
-  Reducing search barriers for job seekers (Labor Markets)
-  The impacts and limitations of microcredit (Finance)
-  Reducing the cost of lending to low-income borrowers (Finance)
-  Building stable livelihoods for the poorest (Finance)
-  Reducing energy and water use through information and social comparisons (Environment and Energy)
-  Reducing criminal behavior through cognitive behavioral therapy (Crime, Violence, & Conflict)
-  Improving women's representation in politics through gender quotas (Political Economy & Governance, Gender)

Visit the Policy Insights web page at povertyactionlab.org/policy-insights to read more.


POLICY ENGAGEMENT: FROM EVIDENCE TO POLICY


CATALYZING IMPACT BY IDENTIFYING KEY PATHWAYS FROM EVIDENCE TO POLICY CHANGE

How has evidence from randomized evaluations informed policy changes around the world?

In 2018 we launched **Evidence to Policy**, an online resource that highlights the many ways in which randomized evaluations in the J-PAL network have influenced policy and practice.


Structured around six pathways, Evidence to Policy is designed to feature case studies that capture the rich and myriad ways in which research and evaluation can shape decision-making in order to provide policymakers, practitioners, and researchers with practical examples of real-world evidence use. The Evidence to Policy library includes seventeen case studies with more to come.


 **Shifting global thinking:** Knowledge generated by randomized evaluations has fundamentally shaped our understanding of many social policies.

 **Institutionalizing evidence use:** Many organizations, including governments and large NGOs, have institutionalized processes for rigorously evaluating innovations and incorporating evidence into decision-making.

 **Applying research insights:** Lessons from randomized evaluations have informed the design of programs.

 **Adapting and scaling a program:** Programs originally evaluated in one context have been adapted and scaled in others.

 **Scaling up an evaluated pilot:** Innovate, test, scale: Replicating and expanding a successful evaluated pilot to similar contexts.

 **Scaling back an evaluated program:** Innovate, test, reassess: Partners have scaled down, redesigned, or decided not to move forward with programs that were evaluated and found to be ineffective.





CASE STUDY: FROM EVIDENCE TO POLICY

Shifting global thinking: Free bednets to fight malaria

The problem: Despite a large reduction in the global malaria burden over the past two decades, malaria still claims hundreds of thousands of lives each year. In 2017, there were an estimated 219 million cases and an estimated 435,000 malaria deaths globally. Approximately 93 percent of these deaths occurred in sub-Saharan Africa, affecting primarily children under five years of age.

Rigorous research: J-PAL affiliated researchers conducted more than a dozen randomized evaluations in eight countries to scientifically evaluate how the pricing of bednets and other preventive health products affected people's take-up and use. Would people be more likely to use a product if they paid for it or if they received it for free?

The results: These evaluations, taking place in contexts where people had very low ability to pay, suggested that charging fees for preventive health products dramatically reduced take-up. Health products that were distributed for free were generally put to good use.

From research to action: The clear direction of findings across contexts and products helped shift policy and contribute to reducing the global malaria burden. Many organizations, including the United Nations and the World Health Organization, now recognize this principle and have adjusted their policy recommendations. The UK government cited this research in 2009 in calling for the abolition of fees for health products and services in low-income countries.

For more, see Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL). 2018. "The impact of price on take-up and use of preventive health products." J-PAL Policy Insights. Last modified May 2018.

CASE STUDY: FROM EVIDENCE TO POLICY

Scaling back an evaluated program: The limits of technological solutions

The problem: Rural health clinics in India are forced to close when doctors don't show up to work. Health clinics are often the only source of basic health care for rural low-income residents in India. In the Indian state of Karnataka, doctors were present at health clinics less than 40 percent of the time. Clinics can't open unless a doctor is on site, and their attendance is not predictable, so many citizens who visit health clinics leave without receiving care.

Rigorous research: J-PAL affiliate Rema Hanna and J-PAL Executive Director Iqbal Dhaliwal partnered with the National Rural Health Mission of Karnataka to evaluate the impacts of monitoring the attendance of doctors and other health workers through fingerprint readers at clinics. Staff with good attendance would earn cash rewards and non-cash recognition; staff with poor attendance would receive escalating penalties from letters of reprimand to docking of pay.

The results: The intervention had no impact on doctors' attendance and small impacts on attendance of nurses, lab technicians, and pharmacists. Enforcement proved challenging: Very few doctors received notices that they were not compliant (the first step in imposing penalties) and even fewer saw a reduction in pay. The results suggest that the monitoring technology alone was not an effective deterrent of poor attendance.

From research to action: The results of the randomized evaluation informed the government's decision to end the attendance monitoring program and cancel the planned scale-up, freeing up scarce resources. The government displayed considerable foresight in piloting and evaluating the program before rolling it out statewide, resulting in saving taxpayers' money and avoiding an added administrative burden.

For more, see Dhaliwal, Iqbal, and Rema Hanna. 2017. "The Devil is in the Details: The Successes and Limitations of Bureaucratic Reform in India." *Journal of Development Economics* 124: 1–21.





CAPACITY BUILDING

With a focus on learning and innovation, J-PAL works to build the capacity of researchers who produce evidence; policymakers, program implementers, and donors who use it; as well as advocates of evidence-informed policy and students of development economics and public policy.

CAPACITY BUILDING

2018 CAPACITY BUILDING BY THE NUMBERS

J-PAL AFRICA

3 trainings, 40 participants

J-PAL EUROPE

2 trainings, 46 participants

J-PAL LATIN AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN

10 trainings, 554 participants

J-PAL NORTH AMERICA

2 trainings, 102 participants

J-PAL SOUTH ASIA

12 trainings, 236 participants

J-PAL SOUTHEAST ASIA

3 trainings, 97 participants

IN-PERSON TRAININGS

39

PEOPLE TRAINED

1,309

ONLINE LEARNERS EARNING MICROMASTERS COURSE CERTIFICATES

875 learners, 94 countries

J-PAL led trainings in 2018 to build the capacity of government and partner organizations to conduct rigorous impact evaluations and apply evidence to policy. J-PAL regional offices hosted J-PAL's **flagship one-week, in-person Executive Education course, Evaluating Social Programs**, in five locations around the world: India, Indonesia, Italy, the United States, and (in partnership with Innovations for Poverty Action) Uganda. In total, J-PAL trained more than 180 government policymakers and representatives from multilateral donors, foundations, and NGOs in 2018.

Each of J-PAL's six regional offices offered additional **customized trainings** to partners in 2018. These included impact evaluation workshops for government officials held in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Nairobi, and Jakarta; as well as evidence workshops on anti-corruption strategies in Tunis and on crime and violence prevention in New York City, among many others.

More than 12,000 civil servants in Brazil's National School of Public Administration (ENAP in Portuguese) are enrolled in the online, Portuguese-language version of Evaluating Social Programs, offered through a partnership between J-PAL LAC and ENAP.

BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR RIGOROUS RESEARCH

Every year, J-PAL's research and training teams lead a series of one-week trainings for J-PAL and our affiliates' research staff. Many of these staff are responsible for implementing field research while adhering to high-quality research practices and policies; trainings are critical to ensuring that staff are equipped with the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities to conduct rigorous and ethical research.

In 2018 **research staff trainings took place in India, Kenya, and the United States**. Sessions focused on questionnaire and measurement design, survey-based data collection, administrative data retrieval and analysis, research protocols, data security and publication, program monitoring, grant management, coding with STATA, and ethics, among other topics.

Each staff training is the result of close coordination and collaboration between J-PAL regional offices and partners, including Innovations for Poverty Action. More than 130 research staff from J-PAL and our partner organizations participated in trainings in 2018.



"I learned so many things over the course of the week. When attending the lectures, the presenters explained everything in such detail from their own experiences. The case studies helped us understand how we can design different interventions and what the key challenges will be. The course was very inspiring."

— Nasir Iqbal, Additional Director General (Research), Benazir Income Support Programme; Associate Professor, Pakistan Institute of Development Economics, Pakistan; 2018 Executive Education participant

"J-PAL created a really incredible learning environment for people of all backgrounds, all skills, and all levels of experience. The environment was so collegial—you are learning from your peers and your peers are learning from you."

— Chinemelu Okafor, Research Assistant and Student, Nigeria; 2018 Executive Education participant

"We're [now] looking for opportunities to use random assignment in every project that touches our team. The state agency where I work opted to re-allocate half my time to build a unit that uses administrative data to conduct quasi-experimental and experimental studies."

— Weston Merrick, Results Management Coordinator, Minnesota Department of Management and Budget, United States; 2018 Executive Education participant



PHOTO: J-PAL

EXPANDING ACCESS TO LEARNING FOR ALL

J-PAL seeks to make high-quality education accessible to all through rigorous online learning that aims to build a generation of informed leaders in development and social policy.

Topics of study include program evaluation, data analysis, development economics, and microeconomics, all developed in collaboration with J-PAL's network of affiliated professors.

In collaboration with edX and MIT's Office of Digital Learning, **J-PAL is running several full-length courses on the edX online educational platform.**

THE MICROMASTERS IN DATA, ECONOMICS, AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

J-PAL and MIT Economics have developed a **series of rigorous online courses** to educate learners on use of data in policymaking as part of the MITx MicroMasters in Data, Economics, and Development Policy. Through online courses

and in-person exams, MicroMasters participants gain a strong foundation in microeconomics, development economics, and probability and statistics, and engage with cutting-edge research in the field. MicroMasters courses are taught by MIT professors and are open to all who are interested in using evidence to promote effective policies and programs.

As of December 2018, more than 875 online learners from 94 countries earned at least one MicroMasters course certificate, and 119 learners from 42 countries earned the full MicroMasters credential.

Starting in 2018 **credential holders were eligible to apply to a new blended online and in-person master's in Data, Economics, and Development Policy** at MIT's Department of Economics. The MicroMasters credential is the only application requirement; standardized tests and prior degrees are not required. This program is the first of its kind at MIT, democratizing access to higher education by giving students from all regions and backgrounds the opportunity to seek a rigorous graduate degree.

CAPACITY BUILDING

"I love the flexibility the program offers me, as I am able to combine my school work with the MicroMasters courses. Education is power—thank you for empowering the world."

— Ezeoguine Chuka Dean, MicroMasters learner, United States/Nigeria

"The MicroMasters program is a great opportunity to study the best approaches to elevate the poor and eradicate poverty. Coming from Iraq, I understand how such programs can affect society as a whole. I hope the MicroMasters helps me better understand what we can do to make poverty a chapter in history books."

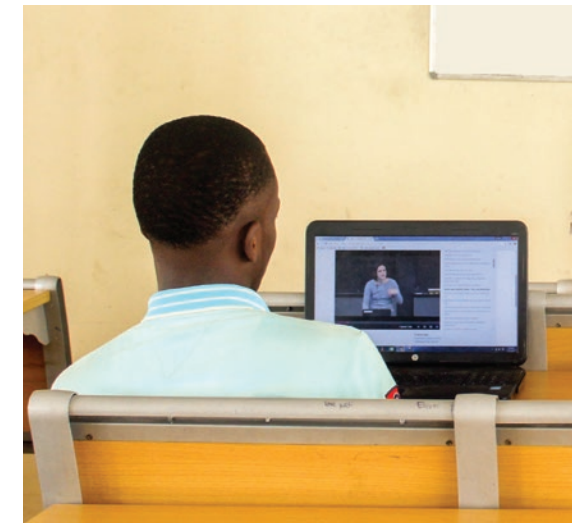
— Mohammed Mahdi, MicroMasters learner, Iraq

"I started the MicroMasters during my maternity leave to maintain my mental balance—and prove to myself that there is still space in my brain beyond 256 children's songs! I appreciate the courses very much and plan to apply the knowledge to my work with Roma and other marginalized groups. Thank you for the great job you are doing."

— Margita Petrikova, MicroMasters learner, Slovakia

"I am a development professional with eight years of experience in large and complex USAID projects. The courses have had a tremendous impact on my career. The survey that I am working on now would not have taken its current shape without the skills I gained in the MicroMasters."

— Yareed Lema, MicroMasters learner, Ethiopia



Ezeoguine Chuka Dean, MicroMasters Learner



Margita Petrikova, MicroMasters Learner

CAPACITY BUILDING

ONLINE EDUCATION: J-PAL'S ONLINE COURSES, INCLUDING MICROMASTERS COURSES, ARE DESIGNED FOR LEARNERS SEEKING TO BUILD THEIR SKILLS IN A SPECIFIC TOPIC AREA.

14.73x: The Challenges of Global Poverty

This course introduces learners to the main topics in global poverty as conceptualized by leading economists and political scientists.

2018 course graduates: 405

14.74x: Foundations of Development Policy: Advanced Development Economics

This course uses economic theory and data analysis to explore the economic lives of low-income individuals and families around the world, and discusses ways to design and implement effective policies and programs.

2018 course graduates: 188

14.100x: Principles of Microeconomics

This course provides students with a firm grounding in the fundamentals of microeconomics.

2018 course graduates: 253

14.310x: Data Analysis for Social Scientists

This course introduces learners to probability, statistics, and best practices for working with and analyzing data.

2018 course graduates: 204

102x: Designing and Running Randomized Evaluations

This course focuses on the practical skills and tools necessary for running high-quality randomized evaluations in the field.

2018 course graduates: 225

101x: Evaluating Social Programs

Through a combination of lectures and case studies from real evaluations, this course focuses on the benefits and methods of randomization, choosing an appropriate sample size, and common threats and pitfalls to the validity of an experiment. Offered in English, Portuguese, and Spanish.

2018 course graduates: 64

350x: Measuring Health Outcomes in Field Surveys

Participants learn how to measure individual and population health, select appropriate indicators and measurement tools, and design surveys, as well as explore practical issues related to safety, hygiene, and ethics. Offered in English and French.

2018 course graduates: 38



PHOTO: MIT REACT

PARTNERSHIPS TO MAXIMIZE REACH

J-PAL partnered with many universities and organizations in 2018 to create alternative paths to credit for MicroMasters learners and to strengthen local teaching capacity.

Ashoka University in India currently incorporates two MicroMasters courses, Data Analysis for Social Scientists and Designing and Running Randomized Evaluations, into their own master's program in economics.

The **American University in Cairo** in Egypt, **Deakin University** in Australia, Sasin Graduate Institute of Business Administration of **Chulalongkorn University** in Thailand, and **Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México**, as well as **Rochester Institute of Technology**, **Doane University**, and the **Harvard Extension School** in the United States, grant credit toward their own master's degree programs to students who successfully complete the MicroMasters credential.

In order to further remove barriers to access faced by particularly vulnerable groups, J-PAL also established partnerships with **MIT's Refugee Action Hub**; **InZone**, an NGO at the University of Geneva working to provide higher education to refugees; and **Young Love**, an NGO in Botswana working to scale evidence-based programs to youth. These partnerships have led to new opportunities for learners to build skills in evidence-based policymaking and apply those skills in their own communities.



OPENING DOORS FOR REFUGEE LEARNERS: MEET RUBA

J-PAL and the MIT Refugee Action Hub (ReACT) are pioneering an innovative program to make the MITx MicroMasters in Data, Economics, and Development Policy accessible to the world's refugees. The collaboration provides students with a direct path to continued education and expanded professional opportunities. Eight learners from six nationalities were accepted to ReACT's first MicroMasters scholarship cohort this year. All have unique stories.

Ruba, an 18-year-old Syrian refugee, was enrolled in graduate school in Syria but had to drop out after fleeing violence in her hometown. After a long asylum process in the Netherlands, Ruba gained refugee status there in early 2018.

With a background in software and systems engineering, and a strong interest in development economics, Ruba sought out academic programs that would open doors to more technical and advanced careers. Now nearly five months into the MicroMasters curriculum, Ruba is well on her way to MicroMasters certification.

She believes that her perspective as a young female refugee provides her with an important viewpoint and motivation for solving global development issues. Ruba shares, **"I can now integrate my prior education as a student of software and systems engineering at Damascus University and my experience as a refugee. I can do something that I have always dreamed of—be a social data expert."**



AFFILIATED PROFESSORS

J-PAL welcomed twelve new exceptional affiliated professors in 2018, expanding our talented network from 159 to 171.

J-PAL affiliates are professors at more than 50 universities who are united in their use of high-quality randomized evaluations to design, evaluate, and improve programs and policies aimed at reducing poverty. Affiliates set their own research agendas, raise funds to support their evaluations, and work with J-PAL staff on research, policy outreach, and capacity building.

NEW AFFILIATES IN 2018

AMANDA AGAN

Rutgers University
Research interests: Crime, labor economics
Regional focus: North America

SULE ALAN

University of Essex, UK
Research interests: Education, household finance
Regional focus: Middle East and North Africa

SARAH COHODES

Columbia University
Research interests: Education
Regional focus: North America

GREG DUNCAN

University of California, Irvine
Research interests: Early childhood development
Regional focus: North America

MARCEL FAFCHAMPS

Stanford University
Research interests: Entrepreneurship, private sector markets
Regional focus: Africa, South Asia

LISA GENNETIAN

New York University
Research interests: Early childhood development
Regional focus: North America

JAMES HABYARIMANA

Georgetown University
Research interests: Education, health
Regional focus: Africa

WILLIAM JACK

Georgetown University
Research interests: Governance, health
Regional focus: Africa, Latin America

KIRABO JACKSON

Northwestern University
Research interests: Education, labor markets
Regional focus: North America

JULIAN JAMISON

University of Exeter
Research interests: Health and financial behavior, research methodology
Regional focus: Africa

CHRISTOPHER KNITTEL

MIT
Research interests: Energy and the environment
Regional focus: North America, South Asia

CHRISTOPHER WOODRUFF

University of Oxford
Research interests: Private sector markets
Regional focus: Africa, Latin America, South Asia

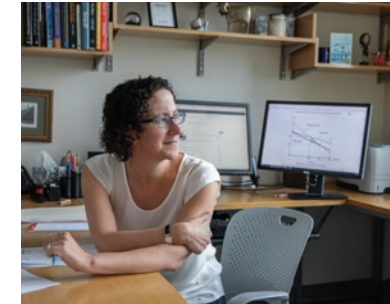
SELECT AFFILIATE AWARDS IN 2018



DAVID DEMING

Harvard University

David was awarded the **2018 David N. Kershaw Award and Prize** from the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management (APPAM), which recognizes early-career contributions to public policy through research that aims to tackle pressing social challenges. “His research... has not only advanced our collective understanding of the issues at play, but... highlights the role researchers can play in finding real-world solutions,” said APPAM President-elect Matthew Stagner.



AMY FINKELSTEIN

MIT
Scientific Director, J-PAL North America

Amy was awarded a **2018 MacArthur Fellowship**, a five-year grant given to individuals who have shown exceptional creativity in their work and the promise to do more in the future. “Using novel empirical designs in tandem with sophisticated econometric techniques and theoretical models, Finkelstein... is challenging conventional assumptions about the economics of health care,” said the MacArthur Foundation.



SENDHIL MULLAINATHAN

University of Chicago

Sendhil was awarded the **2018 Infosys Prize in Social Sciences**, which endeavors to elevate the prestige of science and research in India and inspire young Indians to choose a vocation in research. Jury chair Kaushik Basu, professor of economics at Cornell University, noted, “Sendhil is one of the most original minds in economics today. This prize is a celebration of his contributions across the breadth of the discipline, especially the boundaries of economics and psychology.”



ROHINI PANDE

Harvard University
Co-Chair, J-PAL Political Economy and Governance sector

Rohini was awarded the **2018 Carolyn Shaw Bell Award** from the American Economic Association (AEA), which recognizes contributions to furthering the status of women in the economics profession. “Professor Pande is one of the most influential development economists of her generation,” said the AEA. “She provides an incredible example of what any person—male or female—can aspire to in the profession.”



THE YEAR AHEAD

J-PAL envisions a world in which data and rigorous evidence drive decision-making that changes lives for the better.

Toward this vision, our ambitious 2019 priorities are focused on expanding the depth and breadth of J-PAL's research, scale-ups, and capacity building.



PHOTO: YOUNGLOVE

Teaching at the Right Level, Botswana.

RESEARCH

New research initiatives and ongoing policy outreach work **will enable innovative research that fills critical knowledge gaps** and contributes to global understanding of what works, what doesn't, and why.

The new **Innovations in Data and Experiments for Action (IDEA) Initiative** will provide funding and technical guidance to help researchers and data providers access and analyze large administrative datasets, informing decision-making and leading to less expensive and faster randomized evaluations. Initial partnerships are in progress with state governments in the United States and in India.

An expanded library of robust research resources will be rolled out for J-PAL's 400+ staff and 170+ affiliated researchers, raising the bar for high-quality research and standardizing best practices both inside and outside the organization.

SCALE-UPS

We will **create new partnerships with governments and other organizations** that demonstrate potential for widespread social change and will strengthen relationships with existing partners to increase use of evidence in decision-making at all levels.

J-PAL and Pratham, with the support of multiple donors and local partners, will work together to scale up **Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL)** in countries across Africa and Latin America. The expansion of this program has the potential to help millions of children learn basic reading and math skills, preparing them for future education and a lifetime of higher earnings.

We will relaunch J-PAL's Government Partnership Initiative as the **Innovation in Government Initiative (IGI)**, representing renewed efforts to scale up effective programs to reach more people. Governments will be able to apply for funding under IGI to conduct rigorous impact evaluations and to take evidence-based policies and programs to scale.

CAPACITY BUILDING

We are **building the next generation of evidence-driven leaders** through custom courses and an expanding suite of online education offerings accessible in hard-to-reach places, like refugee camps.

We will accept the first class of students in the **blended MIT Master's in Data, Economics, and Development Policy**, combining online learning with residential education at MIT and intensive internships. The new master's program will equip outstanding students with the skills they need to create evidence-based change in their communities.

JOIN OUR MISSION

More than **400 million people** have been reached by scale-ups of programs found to be effective by J-PAL affiliates' research. This is clear evidence of the potential of research, policy engagement, and capacity building to improve lives.

In 2019, J-PAL is aligning resources in three priority areas:

1. Strengthening the Innovation in Government Initiative and expanding policy outreach;
2. Expanding J-PAL's work in the Middle East and North Africa region; and
3. Supporting J-PAL's regional offices, particularly in Europe and Latin America & the Caribbean, to enable new and innovative research, policy, and training partnerships.

The need for more evidence-informed policy is urgent. J-PAL's expertise and credibility enables both funders and policy partners to make more informed decisions, bringing better policies and programs to those in need. To join us in this mission and identify opportunities to collaborate, reach out to a member of our leadership team (see page 49) or send us an email at info@povertyactionlab.org.

REGIONAL SNAPSHOTS: LOOKING AHEAD TO 2019



J-PAL AFRICA

Together with Pratham, J-PAL Africa is launching a **new joint Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) Africa team** to leverage our organizations' shared expertise and expand our work on TaRL across the continent. In addition, J-PAL is partnering with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for a **new research initiative on identification, payments, and governance**, to fund studies with local researchers of innovative government systems and reforms. The team will also continue outreach with key stakeholders on labor market policies in South Africa and continue its partnership with the City of Cape Town to support joint research, training, and policymaking.

J-PAL EUROPE

J-PAL Europe will continue its efforts to create a culture of evidence use by launching the first request for proposals for the **European Social Inclusion Initiative** to generate more research on effective migrant and refugee inclusion, and by organizing workshops and information sessions in France, Germany, and Sweden to inform and train policymakers and implementers. J-PAL will also explore new collaborations in the region, including with different bodies of the European Union.

J-PAL LATIN AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN

In the year ahead, J-PAL LAC will strengthen its ongoing research and policy partnerships in the region, and launch **new partnerships in Chile and the Dominican Republic**. J-PAL will also conduct needs assessments and **exploratory scoping of the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach** in three countries in Central America in coordination with Pratham, the India-based NGO that pioneered TaRL, and Glasswing, a Salvadoran NGO.

J-PAL MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

J-PAL, with support from UNICEF, will host several policy outreach events in 2019 to raise awareness of the importance of evidence-based policymaking in the Middle East and North Africa region. J-PAL will continue to engage with Egypt's Ministry of Planning to provide insights on priority topics and will explore collaborations to reform the ministry's overall monitoring and evaluation processes.



J-PAL NORTH AMERICA

J-PAL North America will launch the **Work of the Future Initiative** to generate new rigorous research on strategies to alleviate the challenges experienced by workers across North America; an inaugural innovation competition will fund randomized evaluations led by affiliates and government and nonprofit partners. With guidance from its scientific directors, Amy Finkelstein and Lawrence Katz, J-PAL North America will finalize a **menu of programs and policies in which there is a strong base of evidence for decision-making**, and will create new resources to support the use of evidence by policymakers.

J-PAL SOUTH ASIA

J-PAL South Asia will **increase local research capacity** to support our affiliates in carrying out high-quality research and will help affiliates collaborate with faculty at Indian research institutions in order to leverage local knowledge and expertise. J-PAL will expand its work with South Asian governments to **support analytics of large administrative datasets to inform policy and new research**. The South Asia team will also partner with the NGO Breakthrough to **scale up a school-based gender attitude change campaign** across multiple states in India to address social issues related to gender inequality.

J-PAL SOUTHEAST ASIA

J-PAL Southeast Asia will **engage more extensively with the private sector** in 2019 and will establish new research partnerships with government agencies to support the use of evidence in policymaking. J-PAL will also help launch research projects by providing **support to young researchers to travel to Indonesia** to explore potential areas of study. In collaboration with the University of Indonesia, the Southeast Asia team is developing a **course on rigorous measurement and data collection** for staff of Indonesia's National Statistics Agency to run from February to May 2019.

To learn more about J-PAL, visit us at povertyactionlab.org.



J-PAL LEADERSHIP

J-PAL attracts talented and motivated leaders who provide strategic guidance to J-PAL, our sector programs, and our regional offices.

J-PAL LEADERSHIP

Listed in alphabetical order.

David Atkin, MIT
Co-Chair, J-PAL's Firms sector

Abhijit Banerjee, MIT
Director, J-PAL
Scientific Director, J-PAL Africa
Member, Executive Committee of the Board

Mary Ann Bates
Executive Director, J-PAL North America

Marianne Bertrand, University of Chicago
Co-Chair, J-PAL's Labor Markets sector
Member, Executive Committee of the Board

Chris Blattman, University of Chicago
Co-Chair, J-PAL's Crime, Violence, and Conflict sector

Nicholas Bloom, Stanford University
Co-Chair, J-PAL's Firms sector

Shawn Cole, Harvard University
Co-Chair, Research, Education, and Training
Member, Executive Committee of the Board

Bruno Crépon, ENSAE and École Polytechnique
Co-Chair, J-PAL's Labor Markets sector

Iqbal Dhaliwal
Executive Director, J-PAL
Scientific Director, J-PAL South Asia
Member, Executive Committee of the Board

Joseph Doyle, MIT
Co-Chair, J-PAL's Health sector

Esther Duflo, MIT
Director, J-PAL
Scientific Director, J-PAL South Asia
Member, Executive Committee of the Board

Pascaline Dupas, Stanford University
Co-Chair, J-PAL's Health sector
Member, Executive Committee of the Board

Claudio Ferraz, Pontifícia Universidade
Católica do Rio de Janeiro
Scientific Director, J-PAL Latin America & the Caribbean

Amy Finkelstein, MIT
Scientific Director, J-PAL North America
Member, Executive Committee of the Board

John Floretta
Director, Policy and Communications, J-PAL

Francisco Gallego, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile
Scientific Director, J-PAL Latin America & the Caribbean

Hélène Giacobino
Co-Executive Director, J-PAL Europe

Michael Greenstone, University of Chicago
Co-Chair, J-PAL's Environment and Energy sector

Marc Gurgand, Paris School of Economics
Scientific Director, J-PAL Europe

Rema Hanna, Harvard University
Scientific Director, J-PAL Southeast Asia

Kelsey Jack, University of California, Santa Barbara
Co-Chair, J-PAL's Environment and Energy sector

Seema Jayachandran, Northwestern University
Chair, J-PAL's Gender sector

Dean Karlan, Northwestern University
Chair, J-PAL's Finance sector
Member, Executive Committee of the Board

Lawrence Katz, Harvard University
Scientific Director, J-PAL North America

Jens Ludwig, University of Chicago
Co-Chair, J-PAL's Crime, Violence, and Conflict sector

Karen Macours, Paris School of Economics
Co-Chair, J-PAL's Health sector



J-PAL's 2018 Board of Directors meeting in Cambridge, MA, September 2018.

Back Row, Left To Right: Tavneet Suri, John Floretta, Philip Oreopoulos, David Sears, Karthik Muralidharan, Francisco Gallego, Lawrence Katz, Marc Gurgand, Amy Finkelstein, Laura Poswell, Abhijit Banerjee, Bruno Crépon, Iqbal Dhaliwal, Benjamin Olken, Joseph Doyle, William Parienté, David Atkin, Anja Sautmann, Shawn Cole.

Front Row, Left To Right: Mary Ann Bates with Abigail, Lina Marliani, Paula Pedro, Hélène Giacobino, Seema Jayachandran, Shobhini Mukerji, Esther Duflo, Dean Karlan, Pascaline Dupas, Rohini Pande, Craig McIntosh, Anna Schrimpf, Karen Macours.

Lina Marliani
Executive Director, J-PAL Southeast Asia

Craig McIntosh, University of California, San Diego
Co-Chair, J-PAL's Agriculture sector

Shobhini Mukerji
Executive Director, J-PAL South Asia

Karthik Muralidharan, University of California, San Diego
Co-Chair, J-PAL's Education sector

Benjamin Olken, MIT
Director, J-PAL
Scientific Director, J-PAL Southeast Asia
Co-Chair, J-PAL's Political Economy and Governance sector
Member, Executive Committee of the Board

Philip Oreopoulos, University of Toronto
Co-Chair, J-PAL's Education sector

Rohini Pande, Harvard University
Co-Chair, J-PAL's Political Economy and Governance sector

William Parienté, Université Catholique de Louvain
Co-Chair, Research, Education, and Training

Paula Pedro
Executive Director, J-PAL Latin America & the Caribbean

Laura Poswell
Executive Director, J-PAL Africa

Anja Sautmann
Director, Research, Education, and Training, J-PAL


Anna Schrimpf
Co-Executive Director, J-PAL Europe

David Sears
Director, Finance and Operations, J-PAL


Tavneet Suri, MIT
Scientific Director, J-PAL Africa
Co-Chair, J-PAL's Agriculture sector

J-PAL'S REACH

BY THE NUMBERS

 **6**
Regional offices

 **80+**
Countries

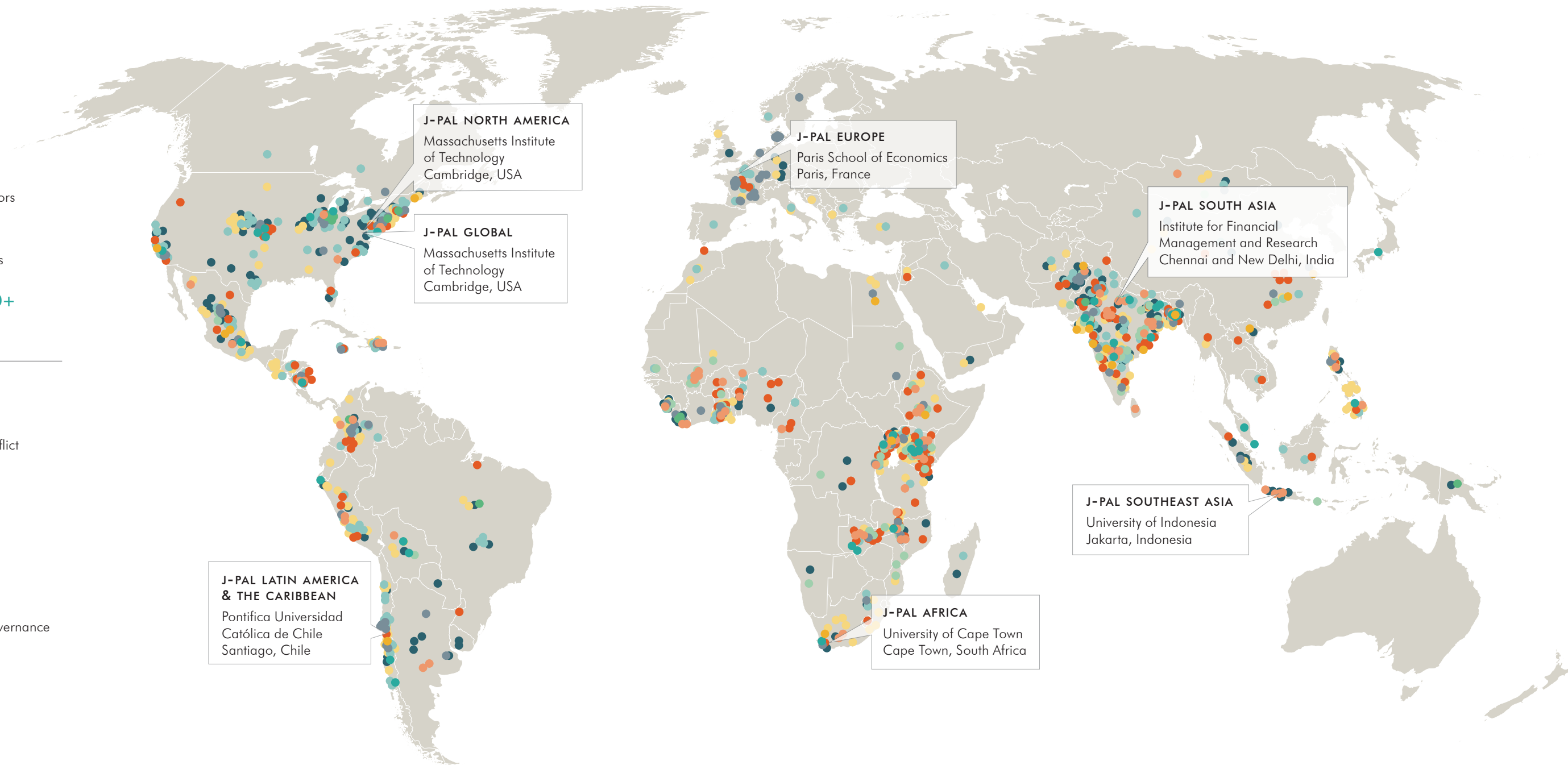
 **170+**
Affiliated professors

 **900+**
Research projects

 **400,000,000+**
People reached

SECTORS

-  Agriculture
-  Crime, Violence, & Conflict
-  Education
-  Environment & Energy
-  Finance
-  Firms
-  Gender
-  Health
-  Labor Markets
-  Political Economy & Governance



J-PAL NORTH AMERICA
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, USA

J-PAL EUROPE
Paris School of Economics
Paris, France

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

J-PAL GLOBAL
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, USA

J-PAL SOUTHEAST ASIA
University of Indonesia
Jakarta, Indonesia

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

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



J-PAL

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