



March 2021 – Economic growth, vaccine promotion, and our 2021 priorities

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NEWSLETTER

March 2021



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Economic growth is not enough: Using evidence to design better social policies

People often ask us: Why do randomized evaluations answer so-called “small” questions about the efficacy of social programs, and why not focus on economic growth to reduce poverty instead? In an opinion piece originally published in Project Syndicate, J-PAL Global Executive Director [Iqbal Dhaliwal](#) and Senior Associate [Samantha Friedlander](#) respond to these questions. To tackle pressing global issues like poverty, inequality, and climate change, we need rigorous evaluations to get the details of social policies right.

[Read more](#)



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Closing the Covid-19 trust deficit to promote vaccination

Misinformation and distrust in health systems lead fewer people to follow health guidelines and receive the Covid-19 vaccine. J-PAL's [Health sector](#) co-chairs [Joseph Doyle](#) (MIT), [Pascaline Dupas](#) (Stanford), and [Karen Macours](#) (Paris School of Economics) discuss recent literature and share policy lessons for building trust in health systems to increase Covid-19 vaccine uptake. [Read more »](#)



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Adapting to the challenges of 2020 and laying out a vision for 2021

Last year brought new challenges and demanded innovative solutions. In the 2020-21 online edition of "Improving Lives Through Evidence," see how our research, policy, and capacity building work evolved to adapt to lockdowns and meet new evidence needs, and explore our ambitious agenda for the year ahead. [Read more »](#)

Learn more about J-PAL's response to Covid-19

FEATURED POLICY INSIGHT



Photo: Jonathan Targovnik | Getty Images

Designing financial and social protection programs to enhance women's economic empowerment

J-PAL's [Gender sector](#) recently published a review of 35 studies across 20 low- and middle-income countries that found access to financial resources or services did not consistently enhance women's economic empowerment. This was because women

were often unable to maintain control over the use of funds within their households. Policymakers should consider design features, like digital transfers and commitment savings accounts, that enhance women's control. [Read more »](#)

FEATURED EVALUATION



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Improving job seekers' employment and earnings through information in Germany

Lack of information and low motivation can make it difficult for job seekers to effectively search for work. J-PAL affiliated professor [Simon Jäger](#) (MIT) and coauthors tested the impact of providing recently unemployed individuals in Germany with informational brochures on job search strategies that motivated them to actively look for a job. Providing the brochures improved employment prospects and earnings for job seekers who were at an increased risk of long-term unemployment, but not for others.

[Read more »](#)

WELCOMING OUR NEW AFFILIATED PROFESSORS

In summer 2020, 34 new affiliated professors joined the J-PAL network. We'll feature a few of them here each month; click through to read more about their research interests.



Kyle Emerick
Tufts University



Arya Gaduh
University of Arkansas



Neale Mahoney
Stanford University



Paolo Pinotti
Bocconi University



Heather Royer
UC Santa Barbara



Lore Vandewalle
The Graduate Institute of
International and
Development Studies

FEATURED EVENTS

Webinar recap: Banking the Unbanked

Last month, J-PAL Southeast Asia's [Inclusive Financial Innovation Initiative](#) hosted a webinar on advancing digital finance in Indonesia. Grace Retnowati and Raunak Kapoor from MicroSave Consulting Indonesia shared an overview of the country's branchless banking agent network, and researchers Gianmarco León-Ciliotta and Firman Witoeilar presented findings from their study on agent incentives. [Read the event recap »](#)

Webinar recording: IDEA Handbook Webinar Series

The [Innovations in Data and Experiments for Action Initiative](#) recently concluded a webinar series for its Handbook on Using Administrative Data for Research and Evidence-Based Policy. In each webinar, chapter authors shared case studies on successful administrative data partnerships and technical expertise for data access and use. [Watch the recordings »](#)

FEATURED TRAININGS

Join the MicroMasters spring semester by March 12

The current semester of our online [MicroMasters program in Data, Economics, and Development Policy \(DEDP\)](#) started on February 9, but it's not too late to join! Through a series of five online courses and proctored exams, learners in the program gain a strong foundation in microeconomics, development economics, and statistics, while engaging with cutting-edge field research. Students who complete the full DEDP credential are eligible to apply for the in-person [DEDP master's program](#) at MIT. [Learn more and register »](#)

Enroll now in J-PAL 101x: Evaluating Social Programs

J-PAL's online Evaluating Social Programs course is open until May 27. Enroll in this free, self-paced course to learn how to use randomized evaluations to rigorously measure the impact of social programs. Through lectures from MIT faculty and J-PAL affiliated professors, along with case studies of real randomized evaluations, participants will cover topics ranging from how to effectively measure outcomes and choose an appropriate sample size, to common threats to the validity of a study. [Learn more and register »](#)

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Punjab to join hands with UN, other global agencies to empower women
[Times of India](#)

Economist Catherine Wolfram joins US treasury to focus on energy & climate policy
[Berkeley Haas Newsroom](#)

King Climate Action Initiative announces new research to test and scale climate solutions
[MIT News](#)

Study: Covid-19 communications featuring racially diverse physicians can improve health outcomes for communities of color
[MIT News](#)

The pandemic pushed this farmer into deep poverty. Then something amazing happened
[NPR Goats and Soda](#)

NEW RESEARCH PAPERS

Market Access and Quality Upgrading: Evidence from Three Field Experiments
[Tessa Bold, Selene Ghisolfi, Frances Nsonzi, Jakob Svensson](#)

'Mobile'izing Agricultural Advice: Technology Adoption, Diffusion, and Sustainability
[Shawn A. Cole, A. Nilesh Fernando](#)

When Transparency Fails: Financial Incentives for Local Banking Agents in Indonesia
[Erika Deserranno, Gianmarco León-Ciliotta, Firman Witoelar](#)

Improving Toddlers' Healthy Eating Habits and Self-regulation: A Randomized Controlled Trial

Robert L. Nix, Lori A. Francis, Mark E. Feinberg, Sukhdeep Gill, Damon E. Jones, Michelle L. Hostetler, Cynthia A. Stifter

FEATURED JOBS

Climate Research and Policy Fellow, Paris, France

Finance & Operations Senior Manager, Cairo, Egypt

Finance & Operations Associate, Cairo, Egypt

Policy Manager, Cairo, Egypt

Training & Policy Manager, Cairo, Egypt

Training & Events Associate, Cairo, Egypt

Policy & Training Manager, Bhubaneswar, India

Training Manager, New Delhi, India

Research Associate (Breakthrough Project), New Delhi, India

Policy Manager (Evidence Use and Scale), Cambridge, MA, US or abroad

Policy Manager (Firms), Cambridge, MA, US or abroad

Policy Manager (Political Economy and Governance), Cambridge, MA, US or abroad

[Explore a full list of open positions around the world »](#)

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 220 affiliated professors at universities around the world, J-PAL conducts 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 and the Caribbean, Middle East and North Africa, North America, South Asia, and Southeast Asia.



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