
March Newsletter: Reflecting on the end of USAID, clean air and water access in Egypt, and supporting public safety in the US

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NEWSLETTER

March 2025



Photo credit: Anton Scholtz, J-PAL/Pratham.

Reflecting on the end of USAID

Over the past two decades, J-PAL and members of our research network have worked with USAID to design, pilot, and evaluate innovative solutions to alleviate poverty; share these learnings widely; and scale programs up—or down—to maximize the impact of development efforts. In a new blog post, [Iqbal Dhaliwal](#) (Global Executive Director, J-PAL) shares a few examples of these projects, highlighting what we learned and how those lessons shaped policy decisions worldwide.

[Read more](#)

Esther Duflo and Abhijit Banerjee on the changing landscape of foreign aid

“The world must now affirm that human lives matter, no matter where they are.” In a new op-ed, [Abhijit Banerjee](#) and [Esther Duflo](#) (Co-Founders and Directors, J-PAL) call for governments, multilaterals, and private philanthropists to double down on investing in evidence-backed programs that improve people’s lives. [Read more »](#)



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Launching the Hub of Advanced Policy Innovation for the Environment

Egypt

J-PAL Middle East and North Africa at the American University in Cairo celebrated the Hub of Advanced Policy Innovation for the Environment (HAPIE) at a launch event in February. HAPIE is part of J-PAL and Community Jameel’s [Air and Water Labs](#) and an extension of the Egypt Impact Lab. It aims to improve clean air and water access by co-generating evidence and informing the policy decisions of government partners.

The launch event featured remarks from H.E. Dr. Rania A. Al-Mashat, Egypt’s Minister of Planning, Economic Development, and International Cooperation, alongside a panel of experts who highlighted initiatives addressing climate change through innovative technologies and sustainable practices. [Learn more and watch the event recording »](#)

New J-PAL initiative: Unlocking effective crime prevention strategies

In February, [J-PAL North America](#) announced its new Initiative for Effective US Crime Policy (IECP) that will address two interconnected issues: the social and economic costs of crime and of the criminal legal system. IECP will support randomized evaluations on public safety, law enforcement, and crime prevention policies to develop actionable recommendations for cost-effective strategies to improve safety and justice. [Read more »](#)

NEW PUBLICATION



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Helping job seekers take up benefits

📍 France

Policy issue: In Europe and beyond, many eligible people don't take up benefits that they are entitled to. People who don't claim these benefits can face an increased risk of poverty and social exclusion, particularly those in vulnerable groups.

Evaluation: Researchers evaluated the impact of invitations encouraging job seekers to meet with their local social security agency to discuss their benefit eligibility and receive application assistance.

Results: Job seekers who received an invitation were more likely to meet with a social worker at the agency, which increased their take-up of benefits that social workers could help them sign up for directly. While participants learned about their eligibility for other

benefits in these sessions, the take-up of those benefits did not increase, suggesting that application assistance can be an essential tool for improving social benefit enrollment.

[Read in English](#)

[Lire en Français](#)

Research by: Laura Castell (The National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies), Marc Gurgand (Paris School of Economics), Clément Imbert (Sciences Po), and Todor Tochev (Institut des Politiques Publiques)

FEATURED BLOGS

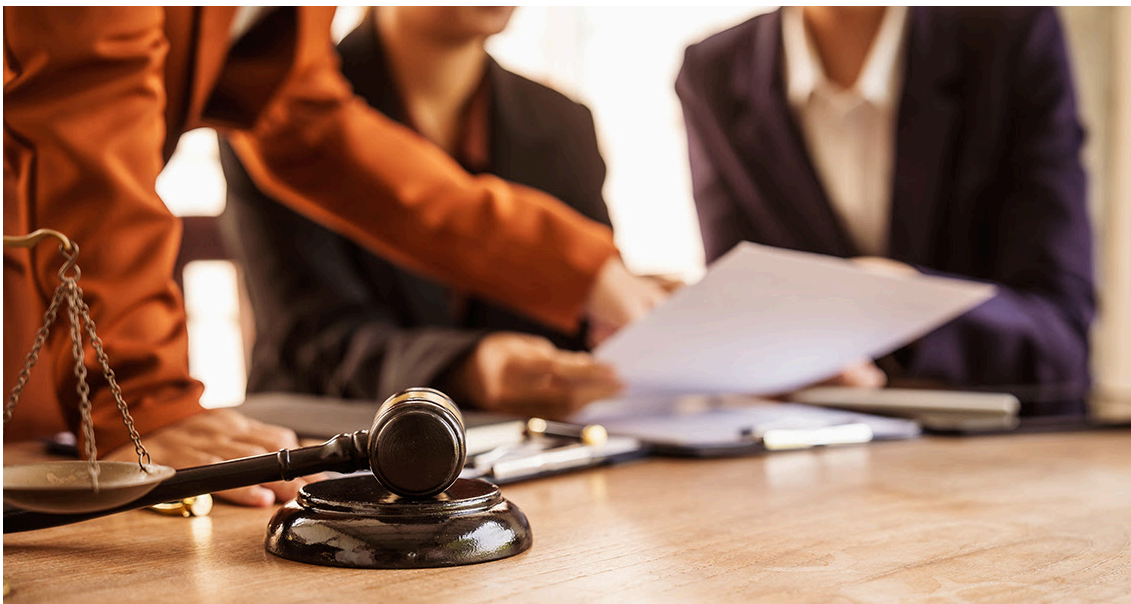


Photo credit: Shutterstock.com

A judge's perspective: The role of rigorous evaluation in the judicial system

From courtroom decisions to juvenile justice programs, evaluation can help shape a more effective and efficient criminal legal system. In a recent blog post from [J-PAL North America](#), Judge Veronica Galván—a longtime advocate for fairness and effectiveness in the judiciary—shares her experience using and generating evidence at King County Court in Washington state and how evidence can advance meaningful reforms in the judicial system. [Read more »](#)

Building partnerships to improve women's security in Latin America

Advancing women's empowerment and combating gender-based violence remains an urgent policy priority across Latin America. Starting in 2022, [J-PAL Latin America and the Caribbean](#) (LAC), Co-Impact, and Community Jameel [partnered](#) to strengthen J-PAL LAC's focus on women and girls' empowerment by expanding collaboration with national and local governments, including in Brazil and Mexico. In the first post of a new series highlighting their government partnerships, J-PAL LAC explores lessons learned from partnerships to strengthen public programs and policies to boost women's empowerment. [Read more »](#)

MORE ON THE J-PAL BLOG



Photo credit: Megan Lang

Postdoc spotlight: Megan Lang, J-PAL '22, on tackling big questions at the intersection of development and the environment

[Read more »](#)



Photo credit: Steven Brownstone, UC San Diego

Insights from aspiring researchers: Highlights from graduate student projects supported by the Agricultural Technology Adoption Initiative

[Read more »](#)

FEATURED RESEARCHER



Focus on economic research that makes a difference in people's lives by influencing policy, by engaging all relevant stakeholders from the research inception to policy implementation."



Solomon Zena Walelign on using impact evaluations to answer policy priorities

In our latest [African Scholar Spotlight](#), Solomon Zena Walelign, an adjunct assistant professor at the University of Gondar, offers advice for researchers interested in impact evaluation and shares his research interests in fields spanning across education, employment, agriculture, and peacebuilding. He discusses how his early exposure to development issues motivates his current interests in evaluating whether NGOs are meeting their objectives and how they can scale to reach more people. [Read more »](#)

WELCOMING OUR NEW AFFILIATED PROFESSORS

In summer 2024, we welcomed 35 talented researchers to the J-PAL network. We will feature a few of them here each month.



Manaswini Rao
University of Delaware



James Robinson
University of Chicago



Santiago Tobón
Universidad EAFIT

FEATURED MULTIMEDIA

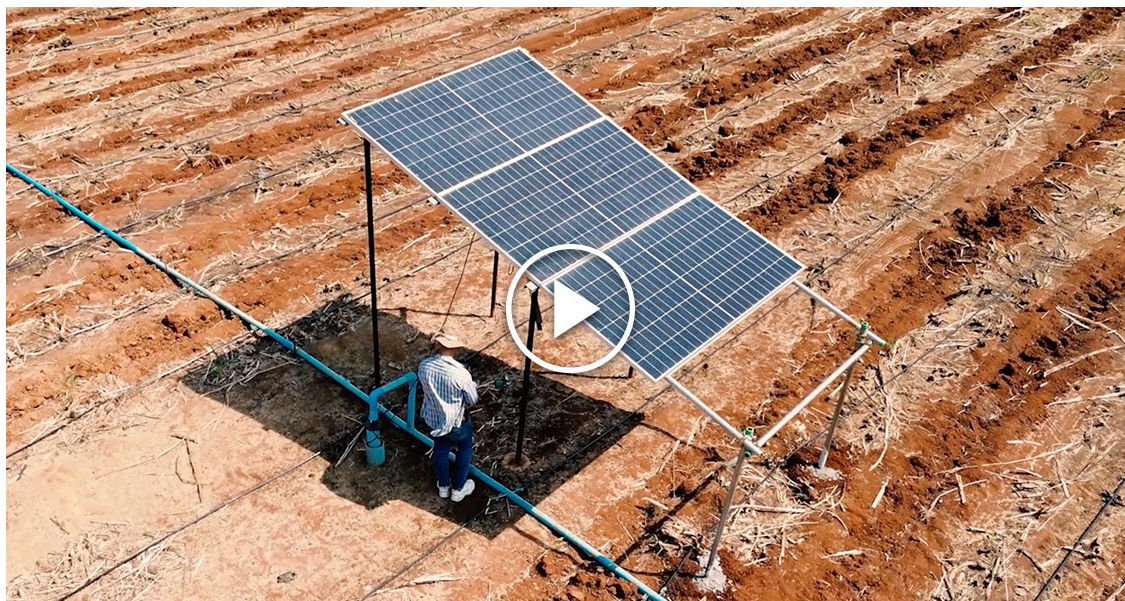


Photo credit: Shutterstock.com

Fifteen years of supporting small-scale farmers

J-PAL and the Center for Effective Global Action's [Agricultural Technology Adoption Initiative \(ATAI\)](#) funds research that answers critical questions on how to boost small-scale agricultural producers' productivity and profits in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. In a new video commemorating ATAI's fifteen years and looking ahead, learn how ATAI informs policymakers' approaches and supports inclusive and resilient food systems. [Watch now »](#)

FEATURED EVENTS

Understanding the Impacts of Cash Transfers on Health

 **March 18**

As cash transfer programs gain popularity in the United States, it's important to understand how they impact people's lives—including their health and use of health care services. In a webinar hosted by [J-PAL North America](#), researchers will present findings from three randomized evaluations on cash transfers' impact on health and how policymakers can apply these results. [Learn more and register »](#)

A Shared Future: The Urgency of Action Against Climate Change in Latin America and the Caribbean

 **March 27**

Join [J-PAL Latin America and the Caribbean](#) at Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile for an event featuring [Esther Duflo](#) (MIT; Director, J-PAL; Scientific Director, J-PAL South Asia). After delivering a keynote address, Esther will be joined by leaders from government, civil society, and academia to discuss climate action that prioritizes justice, resilience, and sustainability. The event will be in Spanish, with translation devices available for in-person participants. [Register to join in-person or watch the livestream »](#)

Harnessing Rigorous Research to Shape Climate Policy in Europe and Inform the Public Debate

 **May 14**

J-PAL Europe, the King Climate Action Initiative, and the IZA Institute of Labor Economics (IZA) are hosting a policy roundtable in Bonn, Germany, as part of the IZA Workshop on Climate and Environmental Economics. The roundtable will bring together an active audience of representatives of European institutions, as well as the participants of the IZA scientific workshop, to discuss how rigorous evidence can inform climate policy in Europe. [Register for in-person attendance »](#)

FEATURED TRAININGS

J-PAL Africa's Evaluating Social Programs course in Cape Town

 **Apply by March 31**

How do you know if your organization's programs are achieving their intended impact? Join J-PAL Africa's upcoming [Evaluating Social Programs](#) course from July 21 to 25 to learn why and when randomized evaluations can be used to rigorously measure the impact of social programs and how findings can inform decision-making. Participants will explore these topics through interactive lectures and real-world case studies while connecting with fellow policymakers, practitioners, and researchers. Applications are due March 31, but candidates are encouraged to apply early as space is limited. [Learn more and apply »](#)

Open enrollment for the DEDP MicroMasters Program

 **Term starts May 13**

The MicroMasters Program in [Data, Economics, and Design of Policy \(DEDP\)](#) is open for enrollment, with the next series of courses starting on May 13. [Enroll today »](#)

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

[These teens can do incredible math in their heads but fail in a classroom](#)
The Hechinger Report

[Can behavioral economics explain America's gun violence epidemic?](#)
The Daily Economy

[International research center to work with Pierce County on combatting opioid addiction](#)
Gig Harbor Now

NEW RESEARCH PAPERS

Can Teaching be Taught? Improving Teachers' Pedagogical Skills at Scale in Rural Peru
Juan F. Castro, Paul Glewwe, Alexandra Heredia-Mayo, Stephanie Majerowicz, and Ricardo Montero

Promotions and Productivity: The Role of Meritocracy and Pay Progression in the Public Sector

Erika Deserranno, Philipp Kastrau, and Gianmarco León-Ciliotta

Do Behavioral Frictions Prevent Firms from Adopting Profitable Opportunities?

Paul Gertler, Sean Higgins, Ulrike Malmendier, and Waldo Ojeda

Community Targeting at Scale

Sudarno Sumarto, Elan Satriawan, Benjamin A. Olken, Abhijit Banerjee, Achmad Tohari, Vivi Alatas, and Rema Hanna

FEATURED JOBS

Research Assistant (Pre-Doctoral), Paris, France

Training Intern, Paris, France

Research Associate (Microfinance), Santiago, Chile (remote)

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

Policy Manager (Scale-Ups), New Delhi, Delhi, India

Senior AI Policy Associate, Cambridge, MA, US.

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

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J-PAL Africa's Girls' Education and Empowerment Portfolio has launched a bi-monthly newsletter on advancing girls' education and empowerment in Africa. Sign up to stay informed on the latest research, evidence-based strategies, and policy insights. [Subscribe](#)

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