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NEWSLETTER

October 2024



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NEW POLICY INSIGHT

Improving market access to spur business and job growth

In a new Policy Insight, J-PAL's [Firms sector](#) reviews evidence from fifteen randomized evaluations across eleven low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) on strategies designed to support small businesses' access to markets to help them grow.

Policy issue: The vast majority—about 90 percent—of jobs in LMICs are found in the private sector, but many businesses are small and struggle to expand. Resources like

microcredit and skills training have had modest effects on business growth and job creation, suggesting businesses and entrepreneurs also face barriers in accessing buyers for their goods and services. Market access interventions aim to catalyze growth by easing these barriers and improving access to new buyers and markets.

Results: Across eleven countries, improved market access for LMIC businesses considerably increased their performance, regardless of whether new sales came from foreign buyers and exporters, large domestic firms, or government contracts. Some programs also led to improved productivity and worker or household well-being. Future research should identify which market access programs are most effective for different firms.

[Read more](#)



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J-PAL champions data-driven solutions for climate action and education at the UN General Assembly

J-PAL was at the forefront of critical discussions on AI, climate action, and education at the 79th session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in September. In a co-hosted session with UNICEF, J-PAL-affiliated researchers highlighted the essential role of educators in implementing new educational technologies and teaching methods to improve literacy and numeracy programs.

At the UNGA Science Summit, J-PAL joined the Innovation Commission for Climate Change, Food Security, and Agriculture for a full-day event with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and others. J-PAL co-hosted panels presenting scalable solutions, from [rainwater harvesting](#) to [village fairs selling agricultural goods](#) like seeds, fertilizer, and other farming inputs right where farmers live, that can combat desertification and enhance agricultural resilience. This event featured innovations from J-PAL and CEGA's joint [Agricultural Technology Adoption Initiative](#) and J-PAL's [King Climate Action Initiative \(K-CAI\)](#).

J-PAL's [Corporate Impact and Sustainability](#) team and K-CAI, with support from Community Jameel and King Philanthropies, also spotlighted data-driven strategies for maximizing private sector climate investments at a roundtable event that convened climate finance, corporate, and academic leaders. Later that week, [Iqbal Dhaliwal](#), J-PAL's Global Executive Director, spoke at the [Impact Data Summit](#), hosted by Mastercard's Center for Inclusive Growth, on the critical roles of AI and data in driving social impact.

Together, these events—and the many discussions that took place alongside them—reinforced our commitment to leveraging rigorous research and a wide array of collaborations to accelerate progress on global poverty, climate, and education goals. Stay tuned on our social media channels for more photos and videos of these events!



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FEATURED BLOGS



Photo credit: Rijul Grover, J-PAL

On the ground in Bihar: Witnessing the power of community-led learning

Despite near universal primary school enrollment, India faces a learning crisis, with alarmingly low literacy and numeracy rates. Community volunteers play a crucial role in expanding Pratham's [Teaching at the Right Level](#) pedagogical approach, which aims to build foundational skills in math and reading. In this blog post, [J-PAL South Asia](#) staff share their experience traveling to Bihar to meet some of these volunteers and learn more about their work. [Read more »](#)

J-PAL MENA and Europe collaborate to deliver a Humanitarian Action Research Incubator in Cairo

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region faces unprecedented strain as conflict and disasters force record numbers of people to flee their homes. To help strengthen humanitarian action through knowledge sharing and collaboration, [J-PAL MENA](#), [J-PAL Europe](#), and Innovations for Poverty Action recently co-hosted a three-day [Humanitarian Action Research Incubator](#) in Cairo, launching their humanitarian research portfolio for MENA. In this new J-PAL blog, J-PAL MENA staff and J-PAL [invited researcher](#) Salma Mousa (UCLA) share how this incubator marks the first step in fostering local research partnerships and generating much-needed evidence on effective interventions for displacement in the region. [Read more »](#)

Harnessing the power of the community to catalyze scale

In India, it is challenging for social protection programs to reach rural low-income households, so robust delivery systems are crucial. Master Resource Persons, or frontline community workers, have been key in scaling the Satat Jeevikoparjan Yojana (SJY) program, an adaptation of BRAC's [Graduation approach](#), to remote corners of Bihar. In this new blog, [J-PAL South Asia](#) staff share key lessons from this successful approach that can benefit implementers and governments working on similar programs. [Read more »](#)

NEW PUBLICATION



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Exploring evidence-based solutions for job search assistance and microcredit

Brazil

Two new publications in the evidence review series, “Evidence in Labor Market Policies and Implications for Brazil,” coauthored by the [Jobs and Opportunity Initiative Brazil \(JOI Brazil\)](#) at [J-PAL Latin America and the Caribbean](#) and the Inter-American Development Bank, analyze the effectiveness of job search assistance and microcredit programs in overcoming barriers to employment and entrepreneurship in Brazil.

Job search assistance: Job seekers can face challenges such as effectively articulating their skills, accessing labor market information, and confronting behavioral biases. This publication delves into evidence on job search assistance programs designed to help individuals overcome these challenges like articulating their skills, accessing information, and confronting behavioral biases. While the evidence on these programs is mixed, the authors highlight promising elements that could be integrated into future policies. [Read more »](#)

Microcredit: Microcredit programs aim to support small and medium-sized enterprises by easing financial constraints, but their impact on income and investment has been inconsistent in low- and middle-income countries. This publication highlights which program features have been found to be effective, such as offering more flexibility and incentives for loan repayments. [Read more »](#)

Authored by: Filipe Cavalcanti (former Research Associate, J-PAL LAC; current Researcher, Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada), Luiz Felipe Fontes (former Research Postdoctoral Fellow, J-PAL LAC; current Assistant Professor, INSPER), Livia Gouvêa (Inter-American Development Bank), **André Mancha** (JOI Brazil Manager, J-PAL LAC), and Laísa Ratcher (Inter-American Development Bank)

WELCOMING OUR NEW AFFILIATED PROFESSORS

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



Edward Asiedu
University of Ghana
Business School



Mahreen Mahmud
University of Exeter
Business School



Andreas Stegmann
University of Warwick

FEATURED MULTIMEDIA



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WATCH: Building farmers' resilience to climate change

A new video previews findings from a recent [J-PAL Policy Insight](#) on strategies to secure farmers' livelihoods in the face of extreme weather, synthesizing findings from thirteen rigorous evaluations. Learn how policymakers can complement agricultural technologies with social assistance programs to increase small-scale farmers' resilience to climate change. [Watch video](#) »

FEATURED EVENT

Event recap: Reimagining Poverty Alleviation in India

 **New Delhi, India**

This summer, [J-PAL South Asia](#) hosted a roundtable event for government, civil society organizations, and philanthropic foundations on adapting and scaling BRAC's [Graduation approach](#), a multifaceted anti-poverty program targeted at helping the most

economically disadvantaged households become self-sufficient. At the event, J-PAL Co-Founder [Abhijit Banerjee](#) (MIT; Director, J-PAL; Scientific Director, J-PAL Europe), a lead researcher on a six-country evaluation of the Graduation approach, shared insights on the program's impact. [Watch the event »](#)

FEATURED TRAINING

You can still enroll in J-PAL's Evaluating Social Programs online course

Enrollment open until December 9

J-PAL's recently updated, free online course on [Evaluating Social Programs](#) began on September 17 but is open for enrollment through December 9. This self-paced course explores each step in designing a randomized evaluation—from developing a theory of change to navigating randomization design challenges and ethical considerations. Join a community of learners from around the world to learn how to use rigorous evaluation and evidence to understand and measure impact.

Access the course for free or upgrade for \$99 to receive a certificate from J-PAL and MITx upon passing the course. [Learn more and enroll »](#)

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

[Iqbal Dhaliwal on the impact of partnerships in addressing global challenges \[Video\]](#)
Philanthropy Asia Alliance

[How to solve Liberia's acute food-insecurity problem](#)
Liberian Observer

[Improving solutions to forcible displacement through evidence: Learning from impact](#)

[evaluations in East Africa](#)

The UN Refugee Agency

[Morocco's 'Pioneer Schools' program produces significant positive impact on students](#)

[learning, assessment shows](#)

Morocco World News

 **NEW RESEARCH PAPERS**

[Healthcare Appointments as Commitment Devices](#)

Laura Derksen, Jason T. Kerwin, Natalia Ordaz Reynoso, and Olivier Sterck

[Yellow Pages: Information, Connections and Firm Performance](#)

Brian Dillon, Jenny C. Aker, and Joshua E. Blumenstock

[How Do Holistic Wrap-Around Anti-Poverty Programs Affect Employment and Individualized Outcomes?](#)

Javier Espinosa, William N. Evans, David C. Phillips, and Tim Spilde

[Encouraging Digital Financial Technology Adoption During a Crisis: Experimental Evidence from Ghana](#)

Emma Riley and Abu S. Shonchoy

 **FEATURED JOBS**

[Associate Director of Research, Cape Town or Johannesburg, South Africa](#)

[Finance and Operations Intern, Cairo, Egypt](#)

[Senior Administrative Assistant, Cairo, Egypt](#)

[Senior Research Manager, Rabat, Morocco](#)

[Research Associate \(Emissions Trading Scheme\), Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India](#)

[Research Associate \(Smart Metering Evaluation\), Dispur, Assam, India](#)

Policy Associate, Cambridge, MA, US

Pre-Doctoral Research Fellow/Research Associate, Cambridge, MA, US

Senior Finance and Operations Manager, Cambridge, MA, US

Senior Finance Associate, Cambridge, MA, US

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