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**NEWSLETTER**  
September 2024



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**NEW POLICY INSIGHT**

## **How can small-scale farmers build their resilience to climate change?**

In a new Policy Insight, J-PAL's Agriculture and Environment, Energy, and Climate Change sectors synthesize findings from thirteen rigorous evaluations to identify how agricultural technologies and social assistance programs can increase small-scale farmers' resilience to climate change.

**Policy issue:** Small-scale farmers' livelihoods and welfare are highly vulnerable to

unpredictable and extreme weather, which is becoming more frequent and severe due to climate change. These events threaten yields, profits, and overall well-being.

**Results:** The Policy Insight finds that resilience-building technologies and practices, such as stress-tolerant seeds, rainwater harvesting, and climate-smart irrigation, can help farmers maintain or increase their yields and profits. However, complementary social assistance programs are often needed to protect their livelihoods. Policymakers should explore pairing social assistance programs and agricultural technologies to help stabilize farmers' incomes.

[Read more](#)

## FEATURED BLOGS



Photo credit: J-PAL

## Building effective social protection programs: Lessons from Egypt and Indonesia

Social protection programs are rapidly expanding to tackle extreme poverty and reduce inequality in many low- and middle-income countries. Policymakers from Egypt and Indonesia recently convened in Jakarta for a week-long series of meetings and workshops to share lessons on implementing social protection programs in their respective contexts. The trip was organized by [Egypt Impact Lab](#) in collaboration with [J-PAL Middle East and North Africa \(MENA\)](#), [J-PAL Southeast Asia \(SEA\)](#), and [J-PAL Global](#) and supported by the Islamic Development Bank and Community Jameel.

In a new blog post, J-PAL MENA and J-PAL SEA shared lessons from this convening, including improving data quality for effective targeting, improving subsidies, and lessons on designing cash transfer programs. [Read more »](#)

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## Multidisciplinary approaches to governance research

Researchers in J-PAL's network are increasingly collaborating with researchers from disciplines outside economics and incorporating their frameworks and methodologies, yet barriers to collaboration across disciplines persist. J-PAL's [Governance Initiative \(GI\)](#) encourages multidisciplinary research and convenes researchers from across disciplines to tackle complex questions on strengthening governance and boosting political participation. A recent blog post from the GI team shares promising directions for multidisciplinary research that could emerge from these efforts, ranging from deepening the political inclusion of women to better understanding the roles of language and religion in politics. [Read more »](#)

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## Expanding small- and medium-sized enterprises' access to financing

Small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a crucial role in job creation in low- and middle-income countries. However, they often face barriers to accessing finance to help expand their work. A new blog post from [Michael Hou](#) (Senior Policy Associate, J-PAL Global) and [Julie Cobill](#) (ESG Lead, J-PAL Global) explores early findings on innovative approaches to bridge the SME financing gap. The post highlights the potential of mobile data, targeting high-potential entrepreneurs, and asset-based financing to make SME lending more impactful and commercially viable. [Read more »](#)

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## How to use qualitative methods in randomized evaluations

Research staff working on randomized evaluations often use qualitative methods in the research process. More formal guidance can help research teams apply best practices and lessons learned from previous research in economics and other disciplines. With this in mind, J-PAL recently published two new Research Resources, [Integrating qualitative methods into randomized evaluations](#) and [Implementing qualitative methods in the field](#). In a new blog post, we share how [J-PAL MENA](#) and [J-PAL Southeast Asia](#) are working to advance these efforts, describe ongoing evaluations that incorporate qualitative methods, and discuss future opportunities to use qualitative research in randomized evaluations. [Read more »](#)

 **FEATURED MULTIMEDIA**



Photo credit: Breakthrough

## WATCH: Reshaping gender norms in India through an interactive school curriculum

### India

J-PAL South Asia is working with the NGO Breakthrough and the state governments of Punjab and Odisha in India to [scale an interactive curriculum](#) to promote gender equality for seventh- to tenth-grade students, based on evidence from a randomized evaluation in Haryana.

In a new video, J-PAL affiliated professors with NGO and government partners share the policy implications of their research and their collaborative journey from evidence to scale.

[Watch the video »](#)

**Research by:** Diva Dhar (University of Oxford, Gates Foundation), Tarun Jain (Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad), and Seema Jayachandran (Princeton University; Co-Chair, J-PAL's Gender sector)

## FEATURED EVALUATION SUMMARY



Photo credit: Alfa Net, Shutterstock.com

## Digital delivery of humanitarian aid to improve food security for vulnerable women

### Afghanistan

**Policy issue:** Digital payments may be able to help ensure humanitarian aid reaches its intended recipients. However, the evidence of the effectiveness of such payments in crisis settings, especially related to whether it helps avoid diversion to hostile actors, is limited.

**Evaluation:** Researchers evaluated the impact of mobile phone-based digital vouchers on women's food security and mental well-being.

**Results:** Digital payments were effective in improving vulnerable women's food security and mental well-being, and were a cost-effective, efficient, and transparent method of delivering aid in a restrictive environment. There was no evidence that funds were diverted to non-targeted recipients.

[Read more](#)

**Research by:** [Michael Callen](#) (London School of Economics), Miguel Fajardo-Steinhäuser (London School of Economics), Michael G. Findley (University of Texas at Austin), and Tarek Ghani (Washington University)

## FEATURED RESEARCHER



I encourage aspiring scholars to pursue research that influences development and policy decisions.”



## Oluwabunmi Adejumo on reaching marginalized groups and lessons as a J-PAL Scholar

**Ife, Nigeria**

In our latest African Scholar Spotlight, Oluwabunmi Adejumo, a lecturer and researcher at Obafemi Awolowo University, discusses how development economics allows her to contribute to addressing persistent challenges in underdeveloped regions. Oluwabunmi speaks to her interests in labor economics and the big unanswered gender questions that motivate her work. [Read more »](#)

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## 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.*



Brian Cadena  
University of Colorado  
Boulder



Christina Brown  
University of Chicago




Arkadev Ghosh  
Duke University

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## FEATURED EVENTS

### **[UNGA Science Summit] Collaborative Solutions: The UNCCD Flagship Initiative for Food Security and Sustainable Development**

 **September 24**

 **9:00am–5:30pm ET, J-PAL panels in afternoon**



Desertification and land degradation is affecting approximately 40 percent of the world's land—impacting agricultural productivity and the lives of half the global population. In response to this pressing challenge, J-PAL is joining the Innovation Commission for Climate Change, Food Security, and Agriculture for a full-day, hybrid event during the Science Summit at the UN General Assembly, in collaboration with the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, the Arab Gulf Programme for Development, and the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa.

The event will promote a five-year flagship initiative aimed at scaling evidence-based innovations in African countries, with a keynote address from J-PAL affiliated professor and Innovation Commission chair [Michael Kremer](#) (University of Chicago). J-PAL will co-host afternoon panel discussions on scalable policy and technological solutions, featuring innovations funded by J-PAL and the Center for Effective Global Action's [Agricultural Technology Adoption Initiative](#) and J-PAL's [King Climate Action Initiative](#). Though in-person attendance is invitation-only, the event is open to all to join online. [Register to attend virtually](#) »

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## Evidence on Labor Market Policies and Implications for Brazil

 **September 25**

The [Jobs and Opportunity Initiative Brazil](#) (JOI Brazil) at J-PAL Latin America and the Caribbean will host an in-person event in São Paulo at Insper to discuss recent findings on boosting employment in Brazil. The event will highlight the launch of two new publications sharing evidence on job search assistance and microcredit, developed by JOI Brazil in partnership with the Inter-American Development Bank. J-PAL affiliated professor [Marianne Bertrand](#) (University of Chicago; Co-Chair, J-PAL's Labor Markets sector) will deliver keynote remarks, and expert panelists will discuss how to apply this knowledge in Brazilian public policies. [Register today](#) »

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## FEATURED TRAININGS

### Open enrollment and scholarships for the DEDP MicroMasters Program

#### Courses started September 10

The [MicroMasters program in Data, Economics, and Design of Policy \(DEDP\)](#) fall term has just begun. Enrollment is open until October 8. The master's level courses cover a range of topics, including development economics, public policy, and data analysis. Participants who complete the program are eligible to apply for an accelerated master's program at [MIT](#) or one of our pathway universities. Applications for the DEDP master's program, including the new Public Policy Track, will open later this November.

MicroMasters courses are free to audit, with the option to pay to take a proctored exam in pursuit of a course certificate. Scholarships are available to learners from Indonesia thanks to [J-PAL Southeast Asia](#) and from Brazil thanks to the generous support of the Lemann Foundation. [Enroll today](#) »

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### Evaluating Social Programs: Register now for courses online or in Bengaluru

Delve into the practical aspects of how to rigorously assess the impact of your programs in J-PAL's [Evaluating Social Programs](#) course. The training provides an in-depth look at why and when randomized evaluations can be used to rigorously measure social impact, methods and considerations for their design and implementation, and how findings can inform evidence-based policies and programs.

#### September 17

J-PAL's free online [Evaluating Social Programs](#) course is open for enrollment. Complete the course on your own schedule and join a global community of practice to learn how to use

rigorous evaluation and evidence. [Learn more and enroll »](#)

### **December 11–13**

The Centre for Learning and Evaluation of Results (CLEAR) and J-PAL South Asia will hold a three-day, in-person Evaluating Social Programs course for nonprofits, businesses, and investors in Bengaluru, India. Participants will also have the opportunity to engage deeply with innovators and industry leaders through a half-day keynote panel and open-house networking session. Applications are due **October 4**. [Learn more and apply »](#)

### **MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS**

[Improving access to and usage of clean water](#)  
VoxDev

[The best of SSIR: Beyond randomized controlled trials](#)  
Stanford Social Innovation Review

[Making a measurable economic impact](#)  
MIT News

[Breaking the cycle: The struggles and successes of mental health therapy for Ugandan teens](#)  
Devdiscourse

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### **NEW RESEARCH PAPERS**

[Effect of Cash Benefits on Health Care Utilization and Health](#)  
Sumit D. Agarwal, Benjamin Lê Cook, and Jeffrey B. Liebman

[Reducing Emissions and Air Pollution from the Informal Sector: Evidence from Bangladesh](#)  
Nina R. Brooks, Debashish Biswas, Sameer Maithel, Grant Miller, Aprajit Mahajan, M. Rofi

Uddin, Shoeb Ahmed, Moogdho Mahzab, Mahburur Rahman, and Stephen P. Luby

The Impact of Secondary School Subsidies on Career Trajectories in a Dual Labor Market:  
Experimental Evidence from Ghana

Esther Duflo, Pascaline Dupas, and Michael Kremer

Intergenerational Impacts of Secondary Education: Experimental Evidence from Ghana

Esther Duflo, Pascaline Dupas, Elizabeth Spelke, and Mark P. Walsh

Digital Financial Services and Women's Empowerment: Experimental Evidence from  
Tanzania

Rachel Heath and Emma Riley

 **FEATURED JOBS**

Research and Public Policy Project Manager, Paris, France

Emerging Research Manager Fellow, Cairo, Egypt

Finance and Operations Associate Director (Lead), Rabat, Morocco

Senior Research Operations Associate, Amman, Jordan

Research Associate (AP TEACH), Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh, India

Research Associate (Preventing Opioid Use), Chandigarh, Punjab, India

Senior Finance Associate, Cambridge, MA, US

General Data Research Associate, Location varies by position

General Field Research Associate, Location varies by position

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