Institutionalizing evidence and experimentation in policymaking

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J-PAL was founded at MIT’s Economics Department and includes over 160 professors with 909 RCTs in 81 countries.
Capacity building at J-PAL

J-PAL has trained over **7,000 local research staff** in conducting randomized evaluations

**In-person courses**
- Executive Education: Evaluating Social Programs
- Measurement and survey design
- Other advanced courses
- Custom/Private courses

**Online training course (MOOCs)**
- JPAL 101x: Evaluating Social Programs
- JPAL 350x: Measuring Health Outcomes in Field Surveys
- MOOC for Brazilian National School of Public Administration

**MITx Micromasters: Over 10,000 learners from more than 180 countries**
The policy group at J-PAL

\[ E_0[V_2^+(x_2)] = (1 - \Phi_2) E_0[V_2^-(x_2) \mid s_n < z(f_1, s_n)] + \Phi_2 E_0[V_2^+(x_2) \mid s_n \geq z(f_1, s_n)] \].

Denote the first term in curly brackets as \( A \) and the second term in curly brackets as \( B \). Note that \( B \geq A \).

Using this expression, we can, for example, rewrite the first order condition with respect to \( f_2 \) as:

\[ \beta \left( (1 - \Phi_2) A' - \frac{\partial \Phi_2}{\partial f_1} A \right) + \beta \left( \Phi_2 B' + \frac{\partial \Phi_2}{\partial f_1} B \right) - u_1'(f_1 - v) \leq 0. \]

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J-PAL's research and policy outreach work has contributed to cost-effective programs being scaled up to reach over **300 million people**.
Tamil Nadu state

- Population (2016): 72 million
  - California: 39 million
  - Germany: 81 million
  - Thailand: 68 million
  - California: US$53,855
  - Germany: US$50,200
  - Thailand: US$17,800
Goal: Culture of evidence-informed policymaking

- Institutional set up and funds for innovations and testing
- Policy-Research dialogues
- Capacity building and advisory
- Randomized evaluations of innovations
Institutional Framework – Legal Cover and Continuing Ownership

Institutional set up and funds for innovations and testing

Steering Committee
Advisory Committee
Innovation Fund

Regular meetings:
• Quarterly update to Advisory Committee
• Monthly updates to Department

- Engagement started October 2013
- Chief Minister’s Budget announced & MOU signed 2014
- Strategic programs required to undergo impact evaluations
- Demand from departments for high-quality evidence
- Expanded list of topics
Understand context and priorities, map to existing evidence and identify new ideas

Policy-Research dialogues

Formal discussions between policymakers and researchers to:
• Identify priority questions
• Use existing evidence to inform program design/implementation
• Identify new areas for study

• Dialogues with 5 departments
• Existing evidence fed into government decisions on CCTs, education, SME growth, & urban issues
• New scoping studies on health & unemployment
Test New Ideas and Interventions

Randomized evaluations

Feedback loops from research to policy:
• Sharing existing evidence
• Scoping
• Impact evaluation + interim outputs
• Scale-up recommendations

• 8 ongoing evaluations with 7 departments and 21 researchers, e.g.
  – Reducing burden of NCDs
  – Improving sleep for urban poor
• 7 completed scoping studies, e.g.
  – Designing appropriate contracts for public toilets
  – Long-run panel study on aging
Building capacity within the government, institutionalizing a “culture” of evidence

Capacity building & advisory

Data Analytics Unit
Evaluation guidelines & manuals
Customized workshops & trainings

- Data Analytics Unit with 6 staff + Steering Committee
- Evaluation methods manual
- 3 ongoing & 2 completed data analysis projects, e.g.
  - Linking datasets on unidentified bodies & missing persons
  - Bus route optimization
Similarly, J-PAL has worked with 50+ governments to increase the use of evidence in policymaking.

- Ministry of Education, Peru (with IPA, World Bank, and FORGE)
  - Innovation lab to evaluate and scale cost-effective education programs

- Ministry of General Education, Zambia (with IPA, Pratham, VVOB, and UNICEF)
  - Adaptation and scale-up of proven remedial education program

- Ministry of Rural Development, India
  - National scale-up of funds-flow reform.

Office of Evaluation Sciences, General Services Administration, USA
- Evidence and evaluation hub within US government
Some Key Learnings partnering with governments?

- Invest in long-term relationships
- Need significant financial & human resources to invest in relationship
- Support champions for evidence use in government
- Create institutional framework
- Combine global evidence with deep contextual knowledge
- Make use of data the government already collects
- Develop well thought-out theory of change for entire partnership
- Respond to policy windows
- Continuous dialogue
Thank you

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