

# Liberia



PHOTO: GLENN GORDON

In recent decades, trillions of dollars have been spent on programs designed to reduce global poverty, but clear evidence on which programs succeed is rare, and when evidence does exist, decision-makers often do not know about it. Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) is a research and policy nonprofit that discovers and promotes effective solutions to global poverty problems. IPA brings together researchers and decision-makers to design, rigorously evaluate, and refine these solutions and their applications, ensuring that the evidence created is used to improve the lives of the world's poor. Since our founding in 2002, IPA has worked with over [600 leading academics](#) to conduct over [830 evaluations](#) in 52 countries. This research has informed hundreds of successful programs that now impact millions of individuals worldwide. In addition to designing and conducting rigorous evaluations, we have a variety of other partnership models, from consulting with organizations on their monitoring and evaluation work through our Right-Fit Evidence Initiative to supporting governments with evidence generation and use through embedded labs.

## More Evidence

In Liberia, we have continued our global tradition of rigorous, applicable research by building foundational research capacity and generating evidence to reduce poverty and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Examples of our key research findings are below:

### **The Girl Empower program in Liberia led to sustained improvements in child marriage and sexual and reproductive health.**

IPA Liberia partnered with the International Rescue Committee (IRC), the Population Council, and the World Bank's Development Research Group to evaluate the Girl Empower program in Liberia. The program was designed to help girls in emergency situations make healthy life choices, reduce their risk of sexual abuse, and improve school attendance rates.

### **Evaluating a large unconditional cash transfer program implemented by GiveDirectly.**

A body of research supports cash transfers as a way to improve the lives of vulnerable and poor populations. IPA Liberia partnered with GiveDirectly and USAID to evaluate the impact of an unconditional cash transfer and market access program. When COVID-19 hit, researchers [expanded the study](#) to capture the initial direct and indirect impacts the pandemic is having on the livelihoods of rural households. Results of the evaluation are forthcoming.

**IPA LIBERIA**  
Since 2010

**FOCUS SECTORS**  
Peace and Recovery, Governance, Social Protection, Agriculture, Intimate Partner Violence and Gender Equity, Education, Small and Medium Enterprises

**RESEARCH STUDIES**  
16 completed, 6 in progress

**KEY PARTNERS**  
Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Growth Centre (IGC), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Ministry of Education, Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection, Ministry of Mines and Energy, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Bank

**KEY RESEARCHERS**  
Jeannie Annan (IRC), Christopher Blattman (University of Chicago), Darin Christensen (UCLA), Jonathan Robinson (UCSC), Shilpa Aggarwal (India School of Business), Christopher Udry (Northwestern University)

### **IPA Liberia worked with the Airbel Impact Lab at the International Rescue Committee to develop a pilot program called Modern Man Challenge (MMC).**

This interactive SMS intervention encouraged men to critically engage with their masculine identity to improve their partner relationships with the aim of reducing partner violence against women. Analysis of a randomized evaluation is ongoing, but the program's high rate of engagement is promising for other emerging light-touch programs to reduce intimate partner violence (IPV).

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## Better Programs & Policies

In addition to conducting randomized evaluations, IPA Liberia provides expertise through a variety of other partnership models, from providing evidence-based literature and policy reviews, to support the design of monitoring and evaluation systems. Our strong relationships have also positioned us to translate research into policy.

### PEACE & RECOVERY

**Reducing criminality, violence, and drug use after conflict.** An evaluation in Liberia found that cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and cash transfers reduced criminal behavior among high-risk young men. These findings have [informed approaches to reducing crime and violence around the world](#). Notably, the [city of Chicago implemented a CBT intervention](#), modeled on the Liberia program, to prevent gun violence in all public schools. Cities in El Salvador, Colombia, Mexico, and elsewhere are scaling up CBT as a crime reduction tool. Researchers are currently conducting a nine-year follow-up to measure the long-term impacts of the interventions.

### EDUCATION

**Developing Liberia's first national learning assessment system.** IPA is partnering with the Ministry of Education (MoE) to institutionalize and develop a competency-based assessment system in primary education for timely detection of gaps in foundational skills. Co-creation, iteration, and capacity building are pillars of this process to develop true ownership of the system and ensure its long-term sustainability. A national learning assessment system will be a foundational mechanism for more effective governance and efficient use of limited resources.

### AGRICULTURE

**Expanding the benefits of school-based agricultural education.** School-based agricultural programs are a proven and cost-effective means of improving livelihoods and production for smallholder farmers and have become increasingly popular in developing countries. In order to expand the benefits of such programs from the students themselves to their wider communities, IPA is testing strategic communication in the context of the 4-H Liberia program through a range of informational interventions that can help induce higher levels of knowledge flow. It is hoped that these interventions can increase the diffusion of new agricultural practices and innovative processes, which would provide governments around the globe a low-cost mechanism for improving the effectiveness of school-based agricultural programs.

## Our Future

IPA Liberia has established itself as a nonprofit organization that produces high-quality evidence and generates resources to promote evidence-based decision-making. We work with governments, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector to improve the lives of people living in poverty in Liberia and around the world. We will continue with this mission by:

- » **Reinforcing IPA's status as a known source of high-quality research.** As one of the only organizations in Liberia with the skills and capacity to conduct high-quality impact evaluations, we are in a strong position to merge our deep knowledge of local issues with our unparalleled research capability. We have done this with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection, the Ministry of Mines and Energy, and will continue to do so with other partners.
- » **Partnering with decision-makers to seek, generate and apply evidence at scale to help the poor.** Our IPA research affiliates and our local staff are a rich source of deep expertise and have established trusted relationships with local development organizations, academic institutions, and government agencies. We are expanding these partnerships and encourage you to reach out to us if you are interested in using data and evidence to strengthen your programs or policies. Reducing poverty and attaining the SDGs is solely possible with a collaborative effort that uses evidence to inform policies and adapt these to tackle the most pressing issues linked to national and sub-regional development plans.

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Building a world with **More Evidence** and **Less Poverty**.

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