

Malawi



Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) discovers and promotes effective solutions to global poverty problems. We design, rigorously evaluate, and refine these solutions and their applications together with decisionmakers to ensure that the evidence created is used to improve opportunities for the world's poor. In the ten years since IPA was founded, we have worked with over 250 leading academics to manage over 400 evaluations in 51 countries. Future growth will be concentrated in focus countries, such as Malawi, where we have local and international staff, established relationships with government, NGOs, and the private sector, and deep knowledge of local issues.

More Evidence

In Malawi, we have continued our global tradition of rigorous, applicable research by building foundational research capacity and conducting evaluations in areas of pressing national concern. Examples of our research below offer promising insights into everyday issues that affect the lives of the Malawian poor.

AGRICULTURE

Peer training in conservation farming and in-kind rewards for good performance help most in adoption of agricultural productivity-enhancing technologies. This study explored the effects of new ways of sharing conservation farming knowledge and nutrient management practices. We learned that when trained, volunteer farmers can effectively share

conservation farming and nutrient management techniques with others in their villages. These volunteers were most effective in influencing adoption of technologies when they farmed similarly sized fields and had used similar inputs as those they were training, and were also offered moderate, in-kind rewards for good performance.

FINANCE

Can registering a small-to-medium enterprise (SME) help improve their performance? The government of Malawi is working to increase small business registration rates by streamlining their registration process. The government wants to understand whether or not business registration improves enterprise performance. In partnership with the government, we

IPA MALAWI

Since 2010

FOCUS SECTORS

Agriculture
Education
Health
Finance

RESEARCH PROJECTS

12 Completed, 7 in Progress

KEY PARTNERS

Department of Registrar General, City and District Councils, Malawi Microfinance Network, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Gender, Ministry of Trade and Industry, Ministry of Water, New Building Society, Opportunity Bank of Malawi, University of Malawi, World Bank

KEY RESEARCHERS

Ariel Benyishay (University of New South Wales), Xavier Giné (World Bank), Jessica Goldberg (University of Maryland), Mushfiq Mobarak (Yale University), Dean Yang (University of Michigan)

will assess the impacts of formalizing these businesses which are currently operating in the informal sector. Study results have already been influential in informing the Business Registration Bill, which has now been approved by parliament into an Act. Looking forward, we expect to have positive impacts on government revenue streams as well as the survival and growth of small and medium enterprises.

Better Programs & Policies

IPA evidence has already contributed to improving millions of lives. Now, with ten years of evidence to build on, our programs are increasingly focusing on government and partner collaboration to translate evidence into better programs and policies.

HEALTH

Installing chlorine dispensers next to community water sources increases water treatment. In Kenya, this technology led to a six-fold increase in the percentage of households that treat their water before use and has now reached one million people in Kenya, Haiti, and Uganda. Now, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Water and our close partner, Evidence Action, this technology is being piloted in Malawi, with plans for nationwide implementation in 2015.

FINANCE

Fingerprinting microcredit borrowers significantly improves repayment rates, especially among the riskiest borrowers. Because Malawi does not have a unique identification system, it is very difficult to verify credit histories or to enforce sanctions for default. In a 2008 study involving one lender, researchers found that fingerprinting microfinance borrowers significantly increased repayment among those who would otherwise be the most risky clients. The technology was extremely cost effective and has the potential to increase the supply of loans and lower interest rates. With the full support of the Reserve Bank of Malawi, we are now working with the Malawi Microfinance Network to expand this technology to microfinance institutions across the country.



Our Future

IPA Malawi is at an inflection point in its growth. We are transitioning from our early status as a young nonprofit working in the development space into a go-to resource for evidence-based insights for government, nonprofits, and the private sector. As we navigate this transition, we are focusing on two goals. They are to:

- » **Reinforce IPA's status as a known source of high-quality research.** As one of the only organizations in Malawi 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. For example we are the only research organization that effectively measures attribution of outcomes to a particular programme by employing rigorous randomized control trials - an area we have built exclusive comparative advantage in the country.
- » **Partner with decisionmakers 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 established relationships with local development organizations and government agencies. For example, we are now working with officials in the Ministry of Gender to develop an evaluation around the supply and demand factors that affect early child development the results of which will inform their early childhood development and education programs.

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

Contact info-malawi@poverty-action.org Visit www.poverty-action.org/malawi