

Uganda



A mobile banking customer with her phone in Uganda. © 2013 Will Boase

Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) is a global research and policy nonprofit that discovers and advances what works to improve the lives of people living in poverty. IPA tests promising ideas across contexts and along the path to scale, proactively engages key decision-makers throughout the research process, shares findings with the right people at the right time, and equips partners with the skills and tools they need to use data and evidence. Since our founding in 2002, we have worked with over 600 leading academics to conduct more than 900 evaluations in 52 countries. This research has informed hundreds of successful programs that now impact hundreds of millions of lives worldwide.

More Evidence

Since its inception in 2010, IPA Uganda has been at the forefront of collaboration with researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to identify, evaluate, and scale impactful interventions, thereby shaping national policy in a range of sectors. Central to our mission are our partnerships with key government entities such as the Bank of Uganda; the Ministry of Education and Sports; the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development; and the Office of the Prime Minister. These collaborations serve as pillars for the dissemination and implementation of evidence-based policies aimed at driving sustainable development across Uganda.

AGRICULTURE

Rigorous evaluations of engagement strategies across the agricultural value chain

Researchers, in partnership with a large coffee exporting company and IPA, are conducting a randomized evaluation to test whether [providing traders “bonuses” for high-quality coffee](#) affects the prices traders offer coffee farmers and farmers’ incentives to invest in the quality of production. Separately, researchers are evaluating the impact and [cost-](#)

[effectiveness of a farming television program](#) in disseminating recommended agricultural techniques to farmers to increase productivity.

CONSUMER PROTECTION & FINANCIAL INCLUSION

Consumer-driven protection and inclusion mechanisms

Over the years, IPA has partnered with government bodies like the Bank of Uganda and the Uganda Communications Commission to measure risks associated with fraud attempts, debt stress from high-cost loans, and hidden fees/charges on digital payments. For example, researchers have supported the Uganda Communications Commission to test and implement new tools for [analyzing complaints data](#) in mobile financial services. Also, researchers explored a citizen science approach using high-frequency, real-time crowdsourced data to [detect mobile financial services agents’ overcharging](#) and measure the efficacy of information campaigns against overcharging. Separately, researchers are testing the [impact of free legal services](#) to consumers involved in mobile money disputes.

IPA UGANDA

Since 2010

FOCUS SECTORS

Agriculture, Consumer Protection, Early Childhood Development, Education, Financial Inclusion, Gender, Health, Peace & Recovery

RESEARCH STUDIES

85 completed, 42 in progress

KEY PARTNERS

AVSI Foundation; Bank of Uganda; BRAC International; Church of Uganda; Finn Church Aid; Healing and Resilience against Trauma; International Rescue Committee; Ministry of Education and Sports; Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development; Office of the Prime Minister; The Africhild Centre; World Vision

KEY RESEARCHER

AFFILIATIONS

Center for Global Development; The George Washington University; Harvard University; Johns Hopkins University; Kyambogo University; Makerere University; McGill University; Northwestern University; University of Alabama; University of Basel; University of California, Berkeley; University College London; University of Florida; University of Washington; World Bank; Yale University

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Policy, evidence, and learning partnerships in the early childhood development sector

IPA Uganda is a key player in the early childhood development sector, collaborating with multiple partners to lead a variety of interventions. In the [PlayMatters](#) consortium, IPA coordinates the Learning through Play community of practice, while our [Right-Fit Evidence](#) unit supports organizations implementing initiatives to develop robust learning agendas and test interventions along our [path-to-scale](#) framework. IPA is also leading the development of a dual-generation research and policy agenda for children and caregivers in emergency settings. Dual-generation interventions promote a social-ecological approach to early childhood development and explicitly target intergenerational dynamics, addressing the needs of both children and their primary caregivers.

EDUCATION

Institutionalizing the use of data and evidence in education policy

IPA's Embedded Evidence Labs are teams within government agencies that facilitate the use of data and evidence in policymaking, providing support in areas such as policy implementation, administrative data analysis, staff capacity strengthening, research co-creation, and technical assistance. In 2023, IPA conducted a study through an embedded lab with the Ministry of Education and Sports, on the performance of lower-

secondary students in science classes, helping to inform national policy on STEM. The lab expects to initiate more studies, developing a pipeline of services it can periodically provide to the Ministry.

GENDER

Using multiple approaches to influence gender policy and address complex social norms

IPA Uganda collaborates with the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development and civil society actors to address the needs and vulnerabilities of women and girls. These include interventions to address intimate partner violence and negative social norms, as well as promoting women's economic empowerment. For example, using a dynamic, human-centered design process, IPA worked with partners to develop a [group faith-based couples' counseling program](#) that engages faith leaders to champion the prevention of intimate partner violence. The Church of Uganda scaled up this program across the country and is in the final stages of embedding it within its internal structures. IPA also supports the Ministry in applying evidence to the development and review of national policies, such as the National Policy on Elimination of Gender-Based Violence.

HEALTH

Healthcare interventions for vulnerable populations

The exploitative, coercive, and often violent experiences endured by survivors of human trafficking put them at high risk for serious mental health challenges

(Hom & Woods, 2013; Ottisova et al., 2018). In Uganda, Healing and Resilience after Trauma (HaRT), developed by [Move with HaRT](#), is a 12-session, weekly mental health intervention for survivors of human trafficking. The program includes breathwork, yoga, meditation, and themed discussions to improve survivors' selfhood, ability to trust others, and control over their bodies. Researchers are conducting a randomized evaluation to measure the impact of HaRT on survivors' mental health outcomes and their physical and social well-being. In another study, researchers are conducting a stepped-wedge cluster randomized trial to test the efficacy of periodic community-led outreach clinics in increasing the use of critical healthcare services among remote communities.

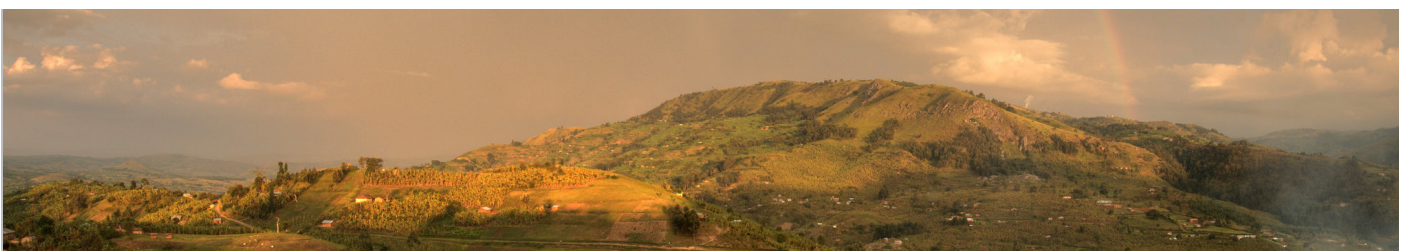
RESEARCH DIVERSIFICATION STRATEGY

Improving the quality and utility of local research

In 2021, IPA began implementing a strategy to diversify its research network. This developed in response to the fact that, previously, only 27 percent of our research was produced by researchers from low- and middle-income countries. IPA Uganda has established strong partnerships with local universities and research institutions to support the co-creation of contextually relevant research. IPA also runs a graduate researcher internship program and provides exploratory research grants to early career researchers with an interest in randomized evaluations.

Our Future

IPA Uganda 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-informed insights for government, nonprofit, and private sector organizations. As we navigate this transition, we are focusing on **reinforcing IPA's status as a known source of high-quality research and strengthening our partnerships with local development, academic, and government organizations.**



A remote area in Western Uganda in which IPA conducted surveys for [a financial inclusion study](#). © 2011 Alex Couatts