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IPA Welcomes New Directors Sarah Kabay, Rafe Mazer, and Elliott Collins

IPA is pleased to welcome three new staffers to lead new global-level initiatives.



Our new Program Director for Education is Dr. Sarah Kabay, a returning face to IPA. Earlier in her career, she spent five years in the research ranks of a young IPA Uganda, helping to establish the country office there and working on education and behavioral savings projects. More recently she completed a Ph.D. in International Development Education at New York University, where she was a Research Associate with the Global TIES Research Center, working on, among other projects, the psychometric analysis of international early childhood development assessments, the cost analysis of Boston’s public prekindergarten program, and a qualitative study of social-emotional learning in Niger.

Dr. Kabay’s interest in measurement and mixed methods research came out of her fieldwork experience in Uganda. “Especially in 2008, 2009, we had very few contextualized measures to work with” she explains. “Looking at a classroom full of kids, how can you tell which ones are more disadvantaged? If you read the literature, you’ll see measures like how many kids are barefoot, but 85 percent of our sample and entire classrooms were barefoot.” In the case of that study, doing qualitative work led them to ask how many of the children were working to earn money and what kinds of resources were available in the home, which served as good indicators of a family’s financial situation. Knowing that allowed the team to better understand those students’ particular educational needs.

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initiative, which is innovating across fields.

That small example is emblematic of the need for more public goods in the field, and Dr. Kabay hopes that IPA can move measurement forward alongside our new measurement initiative, which is innovating across fields. She'll also be leading the direction of IPA's large education portfolio, which already spans 22 countries and over 90 studies. With notable successes in evidence changing education policy in countries like Peru and Ghana, she'd like to build on lessons learned and adapt them to countries, as well as test new ideas. With grants to fund this position and work, Dr. Kabay is excited to connect learning across different studies, advance IPA's policy work in the sector, and conduct her own research. And sometime in between all that, she's finding time to also teach NYU's International Development Education course.



Rafe Mazer joins IPA as our Project Director, Consumer Protection, for IPA's exciting new research agenda on financial consumer protection in the context of financial inclusion. For several years IPA has piloted new consumer protection solutions in areas such as mystery shopping and credit information and Rafe shares IPA's excitement to take this initial success to scale.

Rafe has worked for 10 years in the financial inclusion space and is one of the leading voices on consumer protection in digital financial services. While at CGAP, and later as an independent consultant, he led a wide range of consumer research programs to help policymakers develop evidence-based policies, and financial services providers with responsible product design. His recent work has included some of the first work on consumer protection in East Africa's fast-growing digital credit market.

For Rafe, "Joining IPA feels like I'm opening up this great treasure chest of talent to bring evidence-based consumer protection to a stronger level in emerging markets. I hope that this is just the beginning of a new day for meaningful consumer protection innovations."

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Dr. Elliott Collins joins IPA as the new Director of Poverty Measurement, where he will lead the development of tools to identify and track poverty, including the Poverty Probability Index (PPI), based in IPA's D.C. office.

The PPI, developed under the auspices of the Grameen Foundation is a simple to use scorecard designed for practitioners to easily estimate the probability of a population being under or over a poverty line, simplifying measurement for non-technical staff and organizations.

Dr. Collins joins us from Kiva.org, where he was the Senior Research & Evaluation manager, building & maintaining their M&E system and integrating academic research into their investment strategies. His research has focused on credible and cost-effective approaches to measuring poverty and financial access at the individual and community levels, and understanding how that informs survey design and impact evaluation. Collins has a Ph.D. in Agriculture & Resource Economics from UC Berkeley, where he studied various low-cost approaches to measuring the welfare effects of asset transfers and managed an experiment comparing BRAC's Graduation program to cash transfers in South Sudan. Before that, he was at IPA Kenya, managing survey projects in Bungoma.

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