



# 2023 Annual Report

**Building a World with More  
Evidence and Less Poverty**



Innovations for  
Poverty Action



# Annual Report

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**Designer:** SUB Consulting

**Editors:** Laura Burke and Florence Dzame

**Writers and Contributors:** Laura Burke, Florence Dzame, Bethany Park, Karla Petersen, Michael Podesta, Christine Schwen, Sarah de Tournemire, Cara Vu

**Front Cover Photo:** A man works on his crops in the Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement in Uganda.  
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**For more information, email:** [contact@poverty-action.org](mailto:contact@poverty-action.org)



A group of children in Capiz, Philippines participate in classroom activities as part of an IPA evaluation of education support and information for children at an early age. © 2023 IPA Philippines

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## A letter from Executive Director, Annie Duflo

In 2023, we advanced our Strategic Ambition and accelerated our efforts to progress evidence into impact. Leveraging our 20 years of experience, we published **“Best Bets: Emerging Opportunities for Impact at Scale.”** “Best Bets” are a set of interventions that hold great potential to solve key challenges, but require more evidence and/or partnerships to work at a large scale. To compile the bets, IPA’s sectoral experts and academic partners reviewed hundreds of studies and identified what we believe to be the most promising emerging innovations with the greatest potential to scale, taking into account factors such as the strength of the evidence, impact, cost, and other scalability considerations.

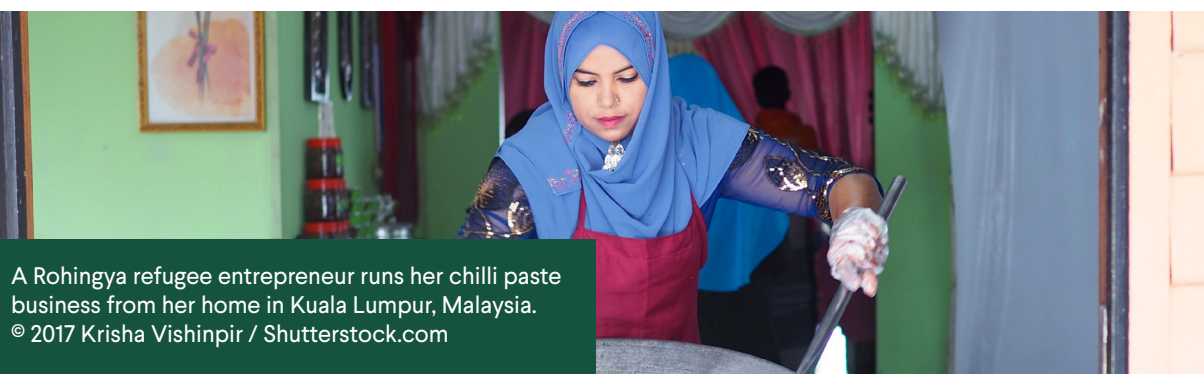
This report reflects years of work and partnerships by hundreds of researchers, partners, and staff, to whom I am so grateful. But this is not an end: we are working and will continue to work with our partners to support the scale-up of these Best Bets while conducting the required additional studies, and to identify the next Best Bets through new research and deep engagement with practitioners and policymakers. In 2023, we produced rigorous evidence in under-researched areas such as human trafficking and intimate partner violence, expanded our policy work to new geographies, made progress in diversifying our researcher network, and accelerated the application of evidence into real-world impact.

We launched the **Displaced Livelihoods Initiative (DLI)**, in partnership with J-PAL, to support cutting-edge research and policy work to discover and advance solutions to help the over 100 million displaced people worldwide rebuild their lives and livelihoods after being forced to flee their homes. DLI is the world’s first research fund dedicated to generating rigorous evidence to inform policies and programs that foster sustainable livelihoods for both displaced and host communities.

We launched a socioeconomic survey in the Philippines that will follow families for 20 years. The **Philippines Socioeconomic Panel Survey (PSPS)** will provide insights into the circumstances and choices related to livelihoods, education, migration, health, and other domains. The data will be used for a range of studies and will help government actors and practitioners make evidence-informed decisions for years, if not decades, to come.

We released results from the first year of IPA’s research on the high and often hidden costs of mobile money—an increasingly ubiquitous payment method in low-and middle-income countries (LMICs). IPA’s **Transaction Cost Index** is comparing prices across 16 countries in Africa, Latin America, and Asia, supplemented by fieldwork that explores hidden costs in Bangladesh, Tanzania, and Uganda.

We are strengthening national ecosystems for sustainable evidence use and partnering with LMIC researchers, facilitating collaborations, and removing barriers to accessing research grants. In 2023, we established six new formal partnerships with universities and research institutions, provided training and dissemination support, and won 11 new proposals led by researchers from LMICs.



A Rohingya refugee entrepreneur runs her chilli paste business from her home in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.  
© 2017 Krisha Vishinpir / Shutterstock.com

## Accelerating the translation of evidence into impact

In 2023, we continued to accelerate the translation of evidence into real impact that improves lives. Despite the tremendous growth of global evidence in international development—now over 12,000 impact evaluations globally<sup>1</sup>—and IPA’s substantial role in this growth, we are just beginning to realize its full potential. To make a significant, lasting improvement in the lives of people living in poverty, we need to expand our scope and focus on using evidence. Last year, we pursued this goal through various initiatives, including:

In 2023, several Best Bets interventions were replicated or scaled. For example, following the impressive 10-year follow-up results showing that a cognitive behavioral therapy program paired with a cash transfer showed results in reducing criminality and other destructive behaviors, the program is in the process of being scaled up in Liberia. Additionally, IPA is working with officials in Sierra Leone to scale another Best Bet nationally, using colored bracelets as a social signal to increase parents’ awareness and actions regarding children’s vaccination status.

IPA also increased sharing evidence strategically (at the country and global level). By strategically, we mean to the right people at the right time, for which we leverage our long-term relationships with decision-makers in the countries where we have a presence. **Our High Impact Policy Opportunity Framework** helps us focus our efforts and resources and in 2023, we identified and advanced several of those. For example, in Kenya, we worked to influence the design of the National Teacher Professional Development policy using existing evidence.

We continued to expand our **Embedded Evidence Labs program**, which helps government partners integrate data and evidence for policy impact. We now support 24 labs across 16 countries, with Lab teams embedded within government agencies to address specific challenges. For example, in Rwanda, a lab embedded within the Ministry of Education is supporting the scale-up of performance-based teacher contracts. The program was rigorously evaluated, together with researchers from Georgetown University and IPA, and found to improve teacher performance and student learning. Based on the results, the Ministry requested that the Lab scale up the program while testing variations and developing systems and capabilities for high-quality implementation.

In the coming years, we will continue to advance the use of evidence to improve the lives of the nearly 700 million people living in extreme poverty worldwide. What positions us for this future? It’s our committed and diverse staff of over 500 globally, our network of hundreds of researchers from the world’s leading universities, our long-term presence in 20 countries, our technical expertise in conducting high-quality research, our unique pipeline of evidence-to-policy services—and of course, our loyal donors and supporters.

Thank you for being part of this journey and for sharing IPA’s vision of a world with more evidence and less poverty.

**With warm regards,**



Annie Duflo, Executive Director

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<sup>1</sup> As recorded on 3ie’s Development Evidence Portal, a repository of rigorous evidence about what works in international development.

# Our Work

**We discover and advance what works to improve the lives of people living in poverty. Through rigorous research, policy partnerships, and advisory services, we equip social sector leaders with the data and evidence they need to make informed decisions and achieve lasting impact.**

Our main areas of work are:



## **Rigorous Evaluation & Policy Work**

With established offices in 20 countries across Africa, Asia, and Latin America, we have a wide global reach. Our field and research staff are global experts in implementing rigorous evaluations, with more than 1,000 ongoing or completed evaluations in 60+ countries to date. Our policy staff in each country office work with government partners and organizations to ensure research is pertinent to key policy questions and ultimately used to inform policies and programs.



## **Sector Expertise**

One of our core capacities is our ability to share insights on what works and to help fill evidence gaps. Our sector experts hold specialized knowledge in a range of fields including Consumer Protection, Education, Entrepreneurship & Private Sector Development, Financial Inclusion, Human Trafficking, Intimate Partner Violence, Peace & Recovery, and Social Protection. In addition to spurring investment in new research to fill important and policy-relevant gaps, they disseminate research findings to decision-makers, oversee competitive research funds, and much more.



## **Right-Fit Evidence Unit**

Our Right-Fit Evidence (RFE) Unit seeks to build learning organizations that can better serve communities across the globe. RFE advises and empowers funders, NGOs, social businesses, and governments to improve their programs and demonstrate their impact through better generation and use of data and evidence, with particular attention to Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) systems.



## **Embedded Evidence Labs**

Policymakers face a range of challenges in using evidence, including a lack of relevant, contextualized evidence, inadequate data and analysis systems, and unreached potential to develop, adapt, and improve programs based on evidence. Our Embedded Evidence Labs program addresses these challenges by supporting government partners to institutionalize the use of data and evidence in their policy cycle. What started with one education lab in Peru has grown quickly to 24 labs across 16 countries and 8 sectors. These Lab teams work within government agencies, primarily ministries, to address context-specific challenges.

# A Year in Numbers

**550+**

Researchers in  
our network

**1,000+**

evaluations to date in

**60+ Countries**

**1,000+**

All-time  
Partners

**20** Country  
Offices

#### **WEST AFRICA**

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Mali  
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Sierra Leone

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Mexico  
Paraguay  
Peru

\* Our Myanmar office will be closed by September 30, 2024.



# Creating Stronger Evidence

For over 20 years, along with other players in our evidence-to-impact ecosystem, we have created evidence to improve the lives of people living in poverty worldwide. Our evidence has grown tremendously, with more than 1,000 evaluations, either completed or underway, as of the end of 2023.

Evidence of the effectiveness of various poverty alleviation approaches is also being translated into large-scale programs and policies. One notable example is a randomized evaluation conducted by IPA and researchers Christopher Blattman, Julian Jamison, Margaret Sheridan, and Sebastian Chaskel in Monrovia, Liberia, which found that cognitive behavioral therapy paired with cash transfers was cost-effective in reducing criminal, violent, and other antisocial behaviors even ten years after the intervention. Results from this study have influenced policy conversations and inspired the design of programs and research of CBT-based programs in other contexts.

In another example, we are currently working with the Sierra Leone Ministry of Health to expand an immunization demand program across the country. IPA and researcher Anne Karing conducted a trial in Sierra Leone that found that a colored bracelet worn by a child—signaling how far along the child is in completing their immunization schedule—increased timely and complete vaccination by 13.3 percentage points at a cost of less than US\$1 per child. We are currently evaluating the value of additional bracelets to signal the initiation of the new malaria vaccine series and completion of the full routine immunization schedule and testing cell phone reminders to encourage vaccinations.



An infant wears a colored bracelet to indicate how far along they are in their immunization schedule, as part of the IPA evaluation described above. © 2017 Anne Karing



Our focus is on producing rigorous evidence, connecting the translation of existing evidence and decision-making, strengthening local ecosystems for sustainable evidence use, and leveraging technology for increased impact, which will allow us to generate more and better information to shape policies for maximum benefit.



### Spotlight: The Philippines Socioeconomic Panel Survey

A major constraint in the understanding of development is the absence of long-term, high-quality data. Most data collection efforts are carried out at a single point in time and focus on only a few variables of interest, relevant to a particular policy question or impact evaluation. Panel studies can offer rich, comparable data by regularly tracking individuals over an extensive period of time.

IPA Philippines and the Global Poverty Research Lab (GPRL) at Northwestern University have partnered with the Philippines Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) and the University of the Philippines School of Economics (UPSE) to launch the Philippines Socioeconomic Panel Survey (PSPS), tracking over 13,500 rural households across the region of Western Visayas. The 20-year survey will cover demographic information, economic indicators, and key priority sectors in the Philippines, such as education, livelihoods, health, and migration. This data will serve as a baseline, midline, and endline for different studies, enabling rigorous evaluations that measure the impact of programs and policies before they are scaled up nationwide. The first wave of data collection started in November 2023, with subsequent waves collected every four years until 2043.

Enumerators with IPA Philippines travel along a road to reach survey respondents as part of the Philippines Socioeconomic Panel Survey (PSPS). © 2024 First Light Studios & IPA Philippines

# Sharing Evidence Strategically

**The number of evidence-based programs operating at scale is still relatively small—but there is a way to change that.** Many innovations are supported by evidence but some key questions remain, such as, does the approach work with a different population? How can we reduce the cost? Can this solution work when implemented by a government at scale? What changes need to be made? More partnerships and investment are needed in promising innovations to answer such questions and move innovations along the path to scale. Equipped with over 1,000 evaluations in our portfolio, IPA is uniquely positioned to identify investments with potential for transformative impact.

Last year, we launched the Best Bets initiative, releasing a report that highlighted 14 innovations that comprise our “best bets” for the next generation of scaled-up evidence-based programs. **By sharing the evidence and outlining the next steps for these *Best Bets*, IPA is working to expand the number of evidence-based programs that can generate real-world impact at scale.**



## What People Are Saying about *Best Bets*

***“This is a great initiative  
for the field.”***

– Jeremy Weinstein, Professor of Public  
Policy and Dean of Faculty, Harvard  
Kennedy School

***“An excellent framework for  
identifying promising new  
innovations on the path to scale.”***

– Kate Sturla, Senior Research Manager,  
What Works Hub for Global Education



## Spotlight: Emerging Innovation

### Preventing Stunting with Small-Quantity Lipid-Based Nutrient Supplements

Nearly 150 million children were malnourished in 2022, falling below the height threshold for their age. Small-quantity lipid-based nutrient supplements, or SQ-LNS, are nutrient-dense products for infants and toddlers that provide energy, protein, essential fatty acids, and a wide range of micronutrients. This impactful treatment is proven to improve growth and development outcomes, reduce malnutrition, and increase child survival.

#### *What's needed next?*

Further evaluation is needed to improve the delivery of these programs in the diverse settings where families in poverty live.





# Equipping Decision-Makers to Use Evidence

IPA is committed to supporting decision-makers to use evidence. We are engaging funders and partners to scale evidence-based innovations and forming coalitions with stakeholders committed to successful program implementation. For example, IPA is providing technical support to the Ghanaian government in scaling up a pedagogical approach known as differentiated learning to over 10,000 schools and 1.8 million children. The approach, which involves teaching students at their level of knowledge, not their grade level, was inspired by the positive impacts of Pratham's Teaching at the Right Level. To improve learning in Ghanaian schools, the approach was developed and evaluated by a coalition of partners led by the government of Ghana over a 10-year period.

To increase the sustainability and longevity of the program, we further evaluated cost-effective ways to provide refresher training for teachers, comparing digital and in-person methods, to enhance quality implementation of the program. We are also integrating differentiated learning indicators into the government's monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) systems, including developing monitoring forms to track progress and inform improvements. IPA is mentoring the Ghana Education Service (GES) staff on how to conduct training evaluations, data collection, and MEL to ensure they can continue these activities independently.



A teacher implements differentiated learning in a Ghanaian school. Ghana was the first country to implement a targeted instruction approach through a government system without external implementation support. © 2019 IPA Ghana

### **Spotlight: Supporting Teacher Achievement in Rwandan Schools (STARS)**

Maintaining a skilled and motivated teacher workforce is a struggle for many governments around the world. IPA—together with researchers Andrew Zeitlin, Clare Leaver, Owen Ozier, Pieter Serneels, and the Georgetown University Initiative on Innovation, Development and Evaluation (gui2de)—supported research to measure the impact of a pay-for-performance (P4P) contract for teachers focused on teacher attendance, student learning, and other outcomes. The study found that students performed significantly better under teachers with P4P contracts, mainly due to teachers' increased presence and more effective classroom practices. Prompted by these encouraging findings, the Rwandan Ministry of Education Embedded Evidence Lab, IPA, the study's researchers, and gui2de are helping to scale the model under the National Strategy for Accelerated Foundational Learning.



Students completed assigned work in a classroom in Rwanda, as part of an IPA evaluation of the STARS program described above. © 2023 Leodomir Mfura



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# Funders

The foundations, governments, corporations, multilateral organizations, and NGOs supporting IPA's research and programs

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*\*\*A special thank you to our supporters who have been with IPA for over 10 years.*

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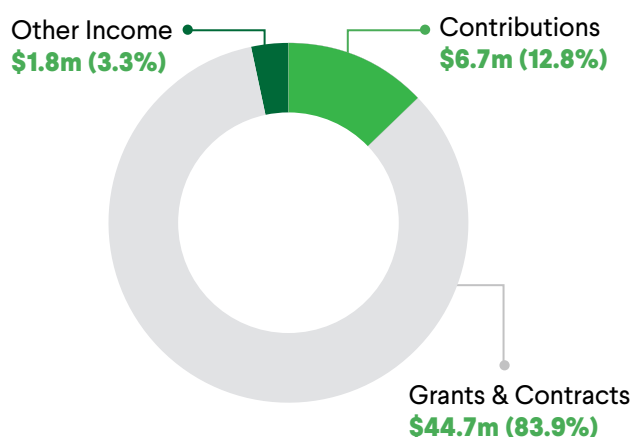
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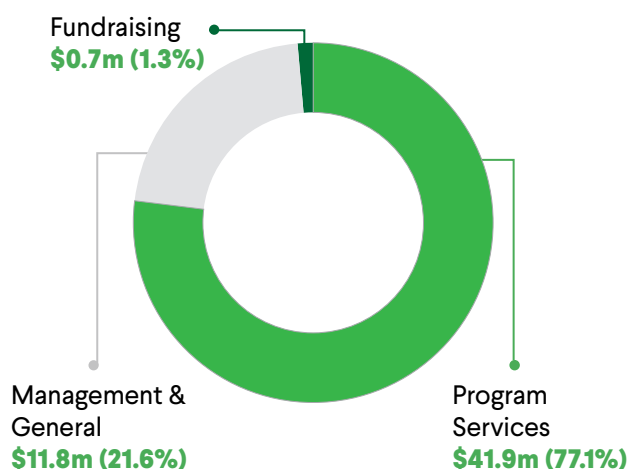
# 2023 Financial Report

## REVENUE



**TOTAL: \$53.2M**

## EXPENSES



**TOTAL: \$54.4M**

## Net Assets

End of 2022: **\$11.86m**

End of 2023: **\$10.26m**

Change in Net Assets: **-\$1.6m**

IPA's 2023 fiscal year covered January 1 to December 31, 2023. Percentages are calculated using exact amounts rather than rounded amounts. See our full, audited financials at: [poverty-action.org/financials](https://poverty-action.org/financials)

IPA is a trusted, high impact nonprofit committed to transparency. We are verified by the following organizations so you can give with confidence. IPA is also one of The Life You Can Save's top recommended charities for effective giving.



\* IPA moved from a three-star rating in 2023 to a four-star rating with Charity Navigator in 2024.

# Our Leadership

As of September 2024. Visit [poverty-action.org/about/people](https://poverty-action.org/about/people) for an up-to-date list.

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## **Santiago Sanchez Guiu**

Director, Global Operations & Systems

## **Chrissy Schwen**

Associate Director,  
Philanthropic Partnerships

## **Katrina Sill**

Associate Director, Right-Fit Evidence

## **Peter Srouji**

Director, Business Development

## **Rachel Steinacher**

Director, Business Development

## **Hamady Tall**

Senior Director, Grants & Contracts

## **Ben Tan**

Director, Right-Fit Evidence

## **Jessica Tollette**

Director, Diversity, Equity, and  
Inclusion (DEI) & Employee Experience

## **Shana Warren**

Associate Director, Path-to-Scale  
Research and Research Scientist

## **Heidi Wilde**

Director, Grants Finance

## **SECTOR LEADERSHIP**

## **Nathanael Goldberg**

Senior Director, Sector Programs

## **Jeni Sorensen**

Deputy Director, Sector Programs  
and Director, Human Trafficking  
Research Initiative

## **Paul Adams**

Director, Consumer Protection  
Research Initiative and Director,  
Financial Inclusion Program

## **Elliott Collins**

Director of Poverty Measurement  
and Research Economist

## **Afke Jager**

Program Lead, Strategic Impact  
Evaluation and Learning (SIEL)

## **Sarah Kabay**

Director, Education Program

## **Julie Kedroske**

Director, Social Protection Program

## **Nessa Kenny**

Associate Director, Peace  
& Recovery Program

## **Elizabeth Koshy**

Associate Director, Entrepreneurship &  
Private Sector Development Program

## **Ricardo Morel**

Director, Peace & Recovery Program

# Our Offices

As of September 2024. Visit [poverty-action.org/contact-us](https://poverty-action.org/contact-us) for an up-to-date list.

## EAST AFRICA

### KENYA

Physical Address: Sandalwood Lane,  
Next to the Sandalwood Apartments (off  
Riverside Drive), Nairobi, Kenya  
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 72427 - 00200,  
Nairobi, Kenya  
Phone: +254 (0) 707 387 429  
Email: [info-kenya@poverty-action.org](mailto:info-kenya@poverty-action.org)  
Country Director: Ginger Golub

### MALAWI

Physical Address: Area 47, Sector 5, Plot  
453. Lilongwe 3, Malawi  
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 31093,  
Lilongwe, Malawi  
Email: [info-malawi@poverty-action.org](mailto:info-malawi@poverty-action.org)  
Country Manager: Tamara Billima-Mulenga

### RWANDA

Physical Address: KK23 Avenue,  
Kicukiro, Kigali, Rwanda  
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 6161,  
Kigali, Rwanda  
Email: [info-rwanda@poverty-action.org](mailto:info-rwanda@poverty-action.org)  
Country Director: Patrick Nalere

### TANZANIA

Address: Second Floor Unit No. 204,  
Oyster Pearl Galleria, 372 Chole Road,  
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania  
Email: [info-tanzania@poverty-action.org](mailto:info-tanzania@poverty-action.org)  
Deputy Regional Director: Zachary Isdahl

## UGANDA

Physical Address: Plot 21 Kanjokya Street,  
Kamwokya, Kampala, Uganda  
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 40260, Nakawa,  
Kampala, Uganda  
Phone: +256 414 669 840  
Email: [info-uganda@poverty-action.org](mailto:info-uganda@poverty-action.org)  
Country Director: Patrick Nalere

## ZAMBIA

Physical Address: Plot 26, Mwambula  
Street, Jesmondine, Lusaka, Zambia  
Phone: +260 211 29 00 11  
Email: [info-zambia@poverty-action.org](mailto:info-zambia@poverty-action.org)  
Country Manager: Tamara  
Billima-Mulenga

## WEST AFRICA

### BURKINA FASO

Physical Address: Quartier Wemtenga,  
secteur n° 44, Arrondissement n° 10,  
commune de Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso  
Mailing Address: 01 BP 492 Ouagadougou  
01 - Burkina Faso  
Phone: +226 25 36 89 98  
Email: [info-burkinafaso@poverty-action.org](mailto:info-burkinafaso@poverty-action.org)  
Regional Director: Emeka Eluemunor

### CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Physical Address: House number 167, Ilot  
14, Lot 77, Quartier Val Doyen, Cocody,  
Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire  
Mailing Address: 16 BP 427 Abidjan 16,  
Côte d'Ivoire  
Phone: +225 27 22 54 08 35  
Regional Director: Emeka Eluemunor

# Our Offices

## GHANA

Physical Address: No. 4, Kpekpe Close,  
2nd Ashiakle Link, Abelemkpe,  
Accra, Ghana  
Digital Address: GA-091-7293  
Mailing Address: PMB 57,  
Osu-Accra, Ghana  
Phone: + 233 544-322-614  
Email: [info-ghana@poverty-action.org](mailto:info-ghana@poverty-action.org)  
Country Director: Salifu Amadu

## LIBERIA

Physical Address: 4th Floor, Save the  
Children Building, Fish Market, Tubman  
Boulevard, Monrovia, Liberia  
Mailing Address: Courier delivery to  
office only  
Email: [info-liberia@poverty-action.org](mailto:info-liberia@poverty-action.org)  
Country Director: Walker Higgins

## MALI

Physical Address: Quartier Baco-  
djicoroni Golf, Rue 804, Porte: 688,  
Bamako, Mali  
Mailing Address: BP: 3068 Bamako, Mali  
Phone: +223 20 28 15 87  
Email: [info-mali@poverty-action.org](mailto:info-mali@poverty-action.org)  
Regional Director: Emeka Eluemunor

## NIGERIA

Address: 4 Fez Street, Wuse II, Abuja,  
Nigeria  
Phone: +234 704 100 0531  
Email: [info-nigeria@poverty-action.org](mailto:info-nigeria@poverty-action.org)  
Country Director: Funmilayo Ayeni

## SIERRA LEONE

Address: 47 A&B Johnson Street,  
Aberdeen, Freetown, Sierra Leone  
Email: [info-sierraleone@poverty-action.org](mailto:info-sierraleone@poverty-action.org)  
Country Director: Walker Higgins

## ASIA

### PHILIPPINES

Address: Unit B 7th Floor Belvedere Tower,  
San Miguel Avenue, Ortigas Center, Pasig City,  
1605, Philippines  
Email: [info-philippines@poverty-action.org](mailto:info-philippines@poverty-action.org)  
Country Director: Aftab Opel

### LATIN AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN

### COLOMBIA

Address: Calle 93 No. 11A-28 Of. 801,  
Bogotá, Colombia  
Phone: + 601-5729210  
Email: [info-colombia@poverty-action.org](mailto:info-colombia@poverty-action.org)  
Country Director: Juan Felipe  
García Rodríguez

### MEXICO

Address: Av Chapultepec 360-Piso 1 Roma,  
Cuauhtémoc, 06700 Ciudad  
de México, México  
Phone: +52 55 9419 0139  
Email: [MEX\\_info@poverty-action.org](mailto:MEX_info@poverty-action.org)  
Country Director: Odette Gonzalez Carrillo

### PERU

Jr. España (Ex Manuel Gonzalez de la Rosa)  
N°396, Magdalena del Mar. Altura Cdra. 30 de  
la Av. Salaverry, Lima, Peru  
Phone: +51 1 299-6846 or 299-6847  
E-mail: [info-peru@poverty-action.org](mailto:info-peru@poverty-action.org)  
Country Director: Barbara Sparrow

### LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES WITHOUT A COUNTRY OFFICE

Director, Out of Country Office Projects,  
for Latin America and the Caribbean:  
Sergio De Marco

# Our Offices

## UNITED STATES

1. Mailing Address  
Innovations for Poverty Action  
228 Park Ave S, Suite 53674  
New York, NY 10003-1502

2. Physical Address  
Innovations for Poverty Action  
1701 Rhode Island Ave NW, 3rd Floor  
Washington, DC 20036  
Phone: +1 (202) 386-6200  
Email: [contact@poverty-action.org](mailto:contact@poverty-action.org)

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## 2023 Environmental Report

IPA's Environmental and Sustainability Policy, issued in September 2023, aims to minimize and mitigate any negative environmental impact arising directly or indirectly from the organization's operations. To align with global best practices, this includes, but is not limited to: empowering and educating staff to implement sustainable practices; integrating environmental considerations into our procurement processes and supply chain; and improving our resource management and waste reduction practices (e.g., by implementing carbon offset initiatives and ensuring responsible disposal of e-waste).

Thus far, we have embraced virtual conferencing and other approaches to reduce travel emissions and are launching a more structured research sector on the environment. Our digital transformation reduces paper use, and sustainability training is part of our onboarding process with annual refreshers to keep our team informed and engaged in best environmental practices. Moreover, we have established a framework for regular environmental performance reviews and reporting at the country office level to enhance transparency and stakeholder engagement.

To learn more about IPA's commitment to sustainable practices, read the full report at [poverty-action.org/environmental-report](https://poverty-action.org/environmental-report).