



Innovations for Poverty Action

Discovering and promoting effective solutions to global poverty problems



Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) is a research and policy nonprofit that discovers and promotes effective solutions to global poverty problems. IPA designs, rigorously evaluates, and refines these solutions and their applications together with researchers and local decision-makers, ensuring that evidence is used to improve the lives of the world's poor. Our well-established partnerships in the countries where we work, and a strong understanding of local contexts, enable us to conduct high-quality research. This research has informed hundreds of successful programs that now impact millions of individuals worldwide.

What is a randomized evaluation?

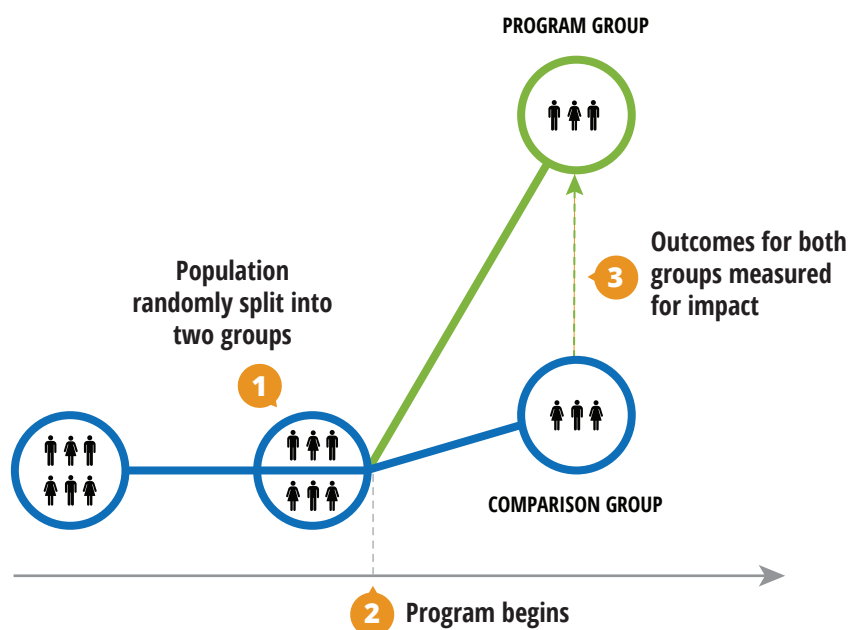
Randomized controlled trials (RCTs), randomized evaluations, rigorous evaluations, and impact assessments are all a slightly complicated way of saying something really quite simple. If we want to know how effective a program is, we need to have a comparison group. Without a comparison, we are limited in our ability to know what would have happened without the program. And the only way of having an equitable comparison group is with random assignment.

How do randomized evaluations work?

In the simplest kind of study, the group we are looking at is divided randomly in two. One group receives a program or intervention, and the other does not. Since assignment to each group is random, everyone has equal probability of receiving the program or not.

Why randomize?

IPA uses randomized evaluations to measure impact because they provide the most credible and reliable way to learn what works and what does not. Randomized evaluations use the same methods frequently used in high-quality medical research and rely on the random assignment of a program or policy to measure its impact on those who received the program compared to those who did not.



What do IPA partner organizations gain from their involvement in IPA projects?

IPA partners gain important insight into which of their interventions work or don't work, and why, and also have the opportunity to adopt lessons learned from other innovative and proven programs. Additionally, IPA partners gain valuable experience when their interventions are rigorously evaluated and learn about how to use leading monitoring and evaluation methodologies.

What does IPA do other than randomized evaluations?

IPA strives to transform its findings and insights into action. We disseminate the evidence we generate to development practitioners and policymakers, and, where appropriate, work closely with partners to facilitate the adaptation of effective programs to other areas of the world. For example, we worked with the Indian NGO Pratham and the Government of Ghana to replicate a successful Indian education program in Ghana, and we are continuing to support the scale-up. In many cases, we also work with organizations to design the innovations that are later evaluated, such as a commitment savings product that encourages savings among bank clients in the Philippines. IPA is also developing a Right-Fit Evidence Unit, which will complement our traditional randomized evaluation work and help find the right-fit between collecting too much data that doesn't get used and not collecting enough, to understand how to allocate limited funding for the greatest impact.

Who funds IPA research?

IPA's expertise is provided as a service to its partners. Funding typically comes either from an organization's evaluation budget or from donors (large and small) who are particularly interested in learning the impact of their dollars invested. On occasion, IPA will secure direct funding for research and evaluation and then search for



partners to evaluate specific innovations or programs. Generally, IPA works with its partners to identify potential funding sources and submit joint proposals. Studies have been funded either directly or indirectly by a variety of foundations in the academic, development, and policy research communities, including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the National Science Foundation, The World Bank, USAID, the Asian Development Bank, CGAP, DFID, 3ie, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the Ford Foundation.

Can organizations afford randomized evaluations?

Randomized evaluations cost less than people think. Evaluations, of course, can be expensive, but should be thought of as an investment in order to learn what programs work, and how to make real improvements. In the short run, randomized evaluations can cost less than some quasi-experimental evaluations because they allow for smaller sample sizes. In the long run, they save money because they provide more reliable information for improving operations and impact.

What about J-PAL at MIT?

IPA is a close partner of the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), some might say a sister organization. The two organizations share a common mission and vision and take similar methodological approaches to development

policy evaluation. Both organizations have pioneered the use of randomized evaluations to study the effectiveness of development interventions worldwide and have collaborated extensively on field studies involving randomized evaluations. Many J-PAL affiliates conduct research with IPA. IPA and J-PAL attempt to bridge the gap between research and policy by creating and disseminating knowledge about what works to policymakers and practitioners around the world.

Why IPA?

Experts in evaluation

We are the largest implementer of randomized evaluations in the development field.

Deep local presence

Our country programs allow us to cultivate deep relationships needed for policy and research oversight.

Policy-relevant research

We work with researchers and decision-makers to identify issues of national concern, then create and evaluate innovative solutions to those challenges.

Research for impact

From the design phase to the publication of results, we make evidence actionable.

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