

# Sierra Leone



In recent decades, trillions of dollars have been spent on programs designed to reduce global poverty, but clear evidence on which programs succeed is rare, and when evidence does exist, decision-makers often do not know about it. Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) is a research and policy nonprofit that discovers and promotes effective solutions to global poverty problems. IPA brings together researchers and decision-makers to design, rigorously evaluate, and refine these solutions and their applications, ensuring that the evidence created is used to improve the lives of the world's poor. Since our founding in 2002, IPA has worked with over 600 leading academics to conduct over 830 evaluations in 51 countries. This research has informed hundreds of successful programs that now impact millions of individuals worldwide. In addition to designing and conducting rigorous evaluations, we have a variety of other partnership models, from consulting with organizations on their monitoring and evaluation work through our Right-Fit Evidence Initiative, to supporting governments with evidence generation and use through embedded labs.

## More Evidence

In Sierra Leone, we have continued our global tradition of rigorous, applicable research by building foundational research capacity and generating evidence to reduce poverty and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Examples of our key research findings are below:

**A truth and reconciliation program increased forgiveness, but worsened mental health.**

A community-based reconciliation program increased forgiveness toward perpetrators of crimes and significantly increased trust in ex-combatants, but it also worsened psychological well-being—increasing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety.

**Exposure to political debates bolstered voters' knowledge and changed voting behavior.**

Watching screenings of political debates increased political knowledge that changed the way people voted. This intervention induced a campaign expenditure response by candidates, and fostered accountability pressure over the spending patterns of elected officials.

**Simple bracelets increased immunization rates in Sierra Leone, at a cost of just \$1 per child.**

A subtle form of social signaling—bracelets—increased timely and complete vaccination by 14 percentage points at a cost of US\$1 per child, with impacts persisting 12 months after the program rollout. The most effective

**IPA SIERRA LEONE**  
Since 2009

**FOCUS SECTORS**  
Agriculture, Financial Inclusion, Gender, Governance, Health, Peace & Recovery, Social Protection

**RESEARCH STUDIES**  
20 Completed, 7 in Progress

**KEY PARTNERS**  
Bank of Sierra Leone, BRAC, International Growth Centre (IGC), Ministry of Health and Sanitation, UNCDF, UNICEF, World Bank

**KEY RESEARCHERS**  
Theresa Betancourt (Boston College), Katherine Casey (Stanford University), Oeindrila Dube (University of Chicago), Rachel Glennerster (DFID), Anne Karing (Princeton University), Bilal Siddiqi (UC Berkeley / CEGA), Tavneet Suri (MIT)

bracelet was color-coded to show if a child had completed all five vaccines on time.



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## Better Programs & Policies

IPA Sierra Leone partners with government, development partners, and funders to ensure evidence is translated into policies that will improve the socioeconomic conditions of underserved communities. We also provide Right-Fit Evidence advisory services, as well as technical support within a number of ministries through our embedded labs.

IPA evidence has already contributed to improving millions of lives. Now, with more than a decade of evidence and experience to build on in Sierra Leone, our programs are increasingly focusing on government and partner collaboration to translate evidence into better programs and policies.

### RESEARCH FOR EFFECTIVE COVID-19 RESPONSES (RECOVR)

#### Supporting a data-driven response to the COVID-19 pandemic

To inform the policy efforts of the Ministry of Health and the Bank of Sierra Leone, IPA surveyed 1,304 people about a range of health, economic, and education impacts, finding that the restrictions put in place have adversely affected people's livelihoods, food security, and mental health. IPA is continuing to engage with government partners to track the effects of the pandemic and inform the response.

### PEACE & RECOVERY

#### Fostering confidence and job readiness among youth after conflict

In partnership with the Ministry of Youth Affairs, researchers from Boston College are working with IPA to evaluate the effects of a cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) intervention on psychometric measures as well as youth employment outcomes. The CBT intervention is being delivered alongside an existing Youth Employment Opportunities Program scheme which aims to link training and cash transfers to jobs.



## Our Future

IPA Sierra Leone 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 Sierra Leone 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.
- » **Partner with decision-makers 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 have established trusted relationships with local development organizations, academic institutions, and government agencies. We are expanding these partnerships and encourage you to reach out to us if you are interested in using data and evidence to strengthen your programs or policies. Reducing poverty and attaining the SDGs is solely possible with a collaborative effort which uses evidence to inform policies and adapt these to tackle the most pressing issues linked to national and sub-regional development plans.

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## Building a world with More Evidence and Less Poverty

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