Letter from Annie & Dean

Dear Friends,

Last year was an exciting year at IPA—2017 marked 15 years of generating high-quality evidence and ensuring that evidence is used to improve the lives of the poor. Together with our network of academics and our implementing partners, we started 70 new studies and continued our efforts to share research findings and promote the use of evidence through more than 85 events around the world.

Many of our partners, including governments, NGOs, and private enterprises, used IPA evidence to inform their programming. For example, the government of Paraguay is scaling up an interactive numeracy program for young children, the social enterprise Fundación Capital is scaling up an initiative to 500,000 people in five countries, and Village Enterprise is now able to scale up its integrated microenterprise program while ensuring quality of implementation at scale.

In 2017, we opened a new office in Mexico, co-launched an Intimate Partner Violence Initiative, and started a research fund for our Peace & Recovery Program.

We continued to influence global debates and communicate key findings to a global audience. Our work was featured multiple times in The New York Times, as well as other news outlets including NPR, The Economist, and The Financial Times.

We continued to innovate and deepen the scope of our research. We opened a new office in Mexico to discover solutions to the country’s pressing safety and security concerns, we launched an Intimate Partner Violence Initiative to identify innovative solutions to a pervasive, global problem, and we also started a research fund for our Peace & Recovery program to generate evidence on ways to reduce violence and fragility and promote peace.

Looking ahead, we are more committed than ever to remaining a trusted source for high-quality data and evidence. This is the foundation of our work, and we are proud to partner with some of the best academics in the world to generate rigorous evidence. We are also more committed than ever to getting evidence to be used. One thing our experience has taught us is that bringing evidence to policy requires continuous engagement with and empowerment of our partners, in addition to having credible, relevant, and accessible evidence to share. Over the coming years, we will be building and strengthening our research and policy partnerships, and we look forward to sharing both our successes and what we learn along the way.

Finally, we are grateful to our partners around the globe for sharing our commitment to rigorous research and the use of evidence to improve programs aimed at alleviating poverty. We couldn’t do it without you.

Sincerely,

Annie Duflo
Executive Director

Dean Karlan
Founder

In 2017, our work was featured in several leading news outlets, including The New York Times, NPR, The Economist, and The Financial Times.

The New York Times

npr

The Economist

Vox

FT

FINANCIAL TIMES

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In addition, we worked to fine-tune our tools. These efforts included a well-received update to the methodology behind the Poverty Probability Index (PPI®), the simple and low-cost poverty measurement tool that made its new home at IPA in 2016 and is now used by more than 600 organizations around the world.

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Our Work at a Glance
We discover and promote effective solutions to global poverty problems

- **21 Country Programs**
  - We have field offices in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

- **8 Program Areas**

- **450+ Partners**
  - We collaborate with governments, nonprofits, academic institutions, foundations, and companies.

- **575+ Leading researchers in our network**
- **700+ Evaluations to date in 51 countries**
- **15 Years of generating evidence and moving research to policy**

What We Do
What it takes to move evidence to impact

IPA leverages our long-term field presence in 21 countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America to conduct high-quality research, engage with policymakers, and build a culture of evidence-informed decision-making. Our research has led to better programs and policies that have impacted hundreds of millions of people worldwide.

Moving Evidence to Policy with the “Three E’s”

**Evidence**
- Evidence should exist, be credible, and be relevant.

**Engagement**
- Evidence should be accessible to the right people at the right time, with buy-in from users and influencers.

**Empowerment**
- Decision-makers should be able to effectively participate in the evidence process and have the know-how to use evidence to inform decisions.

IPA makes an impact by working at the intersection of the three E’s, engaging with our partners throughout the study lifecycle to ensure research is relevant and applicable to real-world problems.
Policy Engagement

In 2017, IPA collaborated with government partners in 21 countries to create and apply evidence. Here are some highlights.

**PARAGUAY**

**Scaling Up a Pre-Math Program**

Paraguay’s Ministry of Education and Culture expanded an early childhood pre-math program called Tikichuela based on evidence from the IPA evaluation that it helped narrow learning gaps among different groups of students. The Ministry has expanded the program to reach schools in 7 of Paraguay’s 17 Departments, and is currently working with IPA to pilot a program that uses the same methodology for science instruction.

**BURKINA FASO**

**Social Protection Policy Evaluation**

In partnership with the World Bank and the governments of Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal, IPA began work on a multi-country evaluation of the effectiveness of a package of productive interventions designed to improve the productivity and resilience of cash transfer recipients. The findings of the evaluation will inform the design and scale-up of social protection programs in the Sahel.

**KENYA**

**Government Partnership to Incorporate Evidence into Long-Term Development Plan**

IPA continued to influence the direction of the Government of Kenya’s Vision 2030 initiative, which seeks to transform Kenya into a middle-income country by 2030 through economic, social and political development, by co-organizing a policy forum that focused on disseminating evidence, relevant policy lessons, and innovations in health, water, and sanitation. IPA has participated in the initiative since 2015.

**ZAMBIA**

**Scaling Up the “Catch Up” Teaching Program**

Led by J-PAL Africa in partnership with IPA Zambia, the Ministry of General Education with additional support from USAID, UNICEF, and VSOB will scale up a teaching program called “Catch Up” to approximately 1,800 schools in Zambia over the next three years. Based on the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach pioneered by Pratham, an Indian NGO, Catch Up aims to improve basic literacy and numeracy skills of primary school students in grades 3-5.

**BANGLADESH**

**Convening SME Decision-Makers**

In partnership with the Prime Minister’s Office, IPA convened researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to promote the generation and use of rigorous evidence in the Small & Medium Enterprise (SME) sector in Bangladesh. IPA researchers shared lessons from global and local studies and the participants strategized about how to apply these lessons to promote the growth of SMEs in Bangladesh.

**PHILIPPINES**

**Evidence Review for Policy Reform**

IPA Philippines provided training to Department of Education officials in developing a theory of change and preparing for a program evaluation at the department’s National Planning Conference. This training was part of an ongoing collaboration to build capacity for rigorous impact evaluation in the department. The conference, which had a theme of “Evidence-based Planning through Research and Innovations,” was attended by approximately 700 department personnel in charge of planning, research, and monitoring and evaluation.

**GHANA**

**Ghana Education Evidence Summit**

IPA partnered with the Ministry of Education to co-host a summit on using evidence to achieve better learning outcomes. International researchers joined Ghanaian scholars to present evidence from Ghana on effective education interventions. The summit also provided policymakers with opportunities to develop skills for identifying quality research, pursue evidence-based policy, and develop a research agenda for the education system in Ghana.

**MYANMAR**

**Public Opinion Research to Inform Peace Process**

Public opinion research conducted by IPA is informing Myanmar’s national peace process. The Joint Peace Fund (JPF) has been set up to support the peace process in Myanmar. IPA is supporting the JPF through the Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices baseline study, which aims to contribute to the development of a comprehensive understanding of people’s knowledge of, behavior toward, and expectations of the peace process.

**RWANDA**

**Ongoing Partnership with the Ministry of Education**

IPA Rwanda formalized its ongoing work with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources through Memoranda of Understanding that will guide collaboration between the two organizations through November 2020 and December 2022, respectively.

**TANZANIA**

**Bus Rapid Transit Policy Evaluation**

IPA is working with the Dar es Salaam Rapid Transit Agency to examine the effect of bus rapid transit routes, which are dedicated lanes for buses that run along existing roads, on outcomes including travel patterns, employment, and incomes. The results will inform the city of Dar es Salaam’s transit policies.

**COLOMBIA**

**Building Capacity for Use of Evidence by Policymakers**

IPA conducted a workshop on monitoring and evaluation (M&E) strategies in the financial sector for attendees from Colombia’s Intersectoral Commission for Economic and Financial Education, which is a group of government and private organizations in charge of the national strategy for financial inclusion and financial education programs. The workshop included practical and theoretical sessions on M&E strategies.
Fighting Climate Change with Small Payments to Farmers in Uganda

Simply paying farmers not to cut down trees reduced carbon emissions—and for relatively little cost.

Deforestation is the second largest source of human-created carbon emissions, after fossil fuels. When trees are cut, they stop absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, and as they decompose or are burned, they release stored carbon into the atmosphere. Curbing deforestation in developing countries is potentially a very cost-effective way to reduce carbon emissions and address climate change. Despite growing interest and investment in reducing deforestation, little rigorous research has been conducted on the most cost-effective ways to do so.

In Uganda, a local nonprofit called the Chimpanzee Sanctuary and Wildlife Conservation Trust offered contracts to owners of forested land in a chimpanzee habitat. The contracts offered annual payments of 70,000 Ugandan shillings (equivalent to US$28 at the time) for each hectare of forested land they conserved. IPA worked with researchers to conduct a randomized evaluation measuring the impact of the contracts. One hundred and twenty-one villages were randomly assigned to either receive the program or serve as a comparison group during the study period.

One and a half years later, landowners who were offered contracts to conserve forest cleared 4 percent of forested land, compared to 9 percent in villages where the program was not offered. This equated to delaying 3,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide per village from being released into the atmosphere, at a cost of 46 cents per ton.

Policy Implications:

- Simply paying landowners in the developing world to not cut down trees can significantly reduce carbon in the atmosphere.
- The approach was relatively low-cost: paying the farmers small sums of money to conserve land was an estimated 10 to 50 times more effective per dollar spent than many energy efficiency programs in the U.S.
- Providing more information to farmers about the program and making the sign-up process easy may increase participation in the program.

Reducing Child Malnutrition in Rural Zambia

Simple, low-cost growth charts reduced malnutrition.

The first 1,000 days of life comprise a critical period of physical and cognitive development. Children who grow and develop normally during this period experience long-term benefits. In contrast, inadequate nutrition during this period can cause stunting, and contribute to long-term developmental consequences that affect future productivity and well-being.

In Eastern Zambia, an estimated 43 percent of children were stunted in 2013. In this context, IPA worked with researchers to evaluate the impact of two approaches designed to increase parental awareness of developmental deficits and improve child nutrition and physical growth: home-based growth charts and community-based monitoring.

The study found that the simple growth charts, which allowed parents to see if their child had a normal height for their age, reduced stunting by 22 percentage points among malnourished children. In contrast, community-based monitoring—where caregivers were invited to quarterly meetings to learn if their children had a normal height and weight and parents of malnourished children received nutritional supplements—had no impact on rates of stunting.

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Researchers estimate that every dollar invested returns $16 in additional lifetime wages for each child who would have been stunted otherwise.

Policy Implications:

- Home-based growth charts appear to be a cost-effective tool to reduce physical growth deficits in this context. Based on data from the original study, researchers estimate that every dollar invested returns $16 in additional lifetime wages for each child who would have been stunted otherwise.
- Further studies are needed to determine whether this intervention would work elsewhere. Although the setting is similar to many rural farming communities in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, the study covered only a relatively small spatial area in a single agricultural season.
- It is also important to investigate longer-term impacts and to what extent the impacts extend into a leaner time of the agricultural cycle.


Photos: Rachel Levenson
Improving Learning in Rural Ghana with Satellite-Transmitted Instruction

An innovative distance-learning model improved children’s numeracy and pre-literacy skills. Although enrollment in primary school has increased dramatically in recent decades, many developing countries struggle to ensure high-quality education for children attending school. In rural areas, this challenge is even more pronounced: learning outcomes in rural areas of lower- and middle-income countries are often only a fraction of those in urban areas. One reason is that rural schools struggle to attract and retain professionally trained teachers.

Researchers collaborated with the Varkey Foundation and IPA to conduct a randomized evaluation assessing whether reliable, high-quality interactive distance classes improved learning outcomes among marginalized school children in rural Ghana. It was the first impact evaluation of interactive distance learning in sub-Saharan Africa.

The study found that after two years, the interactive distance-learning model significantly improved primary students’ numeracy and pre-reading literacy skills. No impacts were found on attendance and classroom time-on-task, suggesting that these gains may result from improved instructional quality rather than increased quantity of instruction time.

Impacts on Math and Reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Effect Size (in Standard Deviations)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Math Test Score</td>
<td>0.26*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Fluency</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Impacts on Foundational Literacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Effect Size (in Standard Deviations)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letters Per Minute</td>
<td>0.82*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Identification</td>
<td>0.17*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Vocabulary</td>
<td>0.17*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Comprehension</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Policy Implications:

» These results suggest that an interactive distance learning model of this nature is a promising approach for reaching marginalized students in rural areas.

» However, the model is expensive. As technology improves, such programs will likely become more cost-effective, making scaling more feasible.
Every year, 1.3 million women and newborns in sub-Saharan Africa die in delivery or shortly thereafter. For delivery complications to be managed effectively, women must deliver in facilities that have essential medicines and supplies, well-trained healthcare workers, and functioning referral systems.

Nairobi, Kenya, has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world. In Kenya, only 5 percent of maternity facilities perform cesarean sections, less than half have referral capacity, and many lack antibiotics and other essential medications. Many Kenyan facilities also perform poorly in nontechnical interpersonal aspects of care, with one in five women reporting that they experienced disrespect or abuse during delivery.

While hundreds of delivery facilities exist in Nairobi, their quality and cost varies widely. In this context, women face many obstacles to delivering where they want, including difficulty choosing a provider, disagreement among family members about where to deliver, and arriving early enough in labor at their desired facility.

In Nairobi, researchers conducted a randomized evaluation of two types of maternal cash transfers to discover if this approach could help women deliver where they wanted and in higher-quality facilities. The first was a cash transfer of 1,000 Kenyan shillings (about US$10) with a label stating, “This is intended to help you deliver in the facility where you want to deliver,” which the women received during their eighth month of pregnancy. The second was the same as the first with an addition: women received an additional cash transfer if they gave birth in a facility in which they had committed to delivering their baby.

The study found that the second type of cash transfer, which incorporated both labeling and precommitment, increased the use of higher-quality delivery facilities and led to improvements in women’s experiences of interpersonal quality of care. The labeled cash transfer had fewer benefits.

Policy Implications:

- While labeling has been found to be nearly as effective as financial incentives in other cases, this research suggests that labeling alone is not effective at increasing the use of high-quality maternity care. Rather, a combination of a labeled cash transfer and incentivized precommitment was needed.

- Even with financial incentives, the quality of care women sought was not optimal, suggesting other interventions are needed to foster use of technically competent care.

- Further research is needed to determine whether the labeled, conditional cash transfer leads to health improvements.
In 2017, we shared results from 28 rigorous evaluations with decision-makers around the world. In addition to those on the previous pages, here are some other noteworthy findings.

**AGRICULTURE**

Engaging farmers as communication partners in Malawi and offering them small, performance-based incentives to share information about sustainable farming practices with others in the village increased adoption of those practices. Researchers found that offering farmers small incentives—in the form of fertilizer or seeds—to encourage them to share information with their peers about two sustainable farming practices, pit planting and organic composting, increased adoption of those practices. Farmers appear most convinced by other farmers who share a group identity with them, or who face similar farming conditions.

**SMALL & MEDIUM ENTERPRISES**

Networking meetings substantially increased business performance in China. Offering managers of small and medium enterprises monthly networking meetings with other firms substantially increased their business performance. Firms whose managers attended the meetings saw an 8 percent increase in sales, which persisted one year after the meetings ended. Profits also rose by an average of RMB 257,500 (US$36,000) for firms offered the program. In response to these findings, the Commission of Industry and Information Technology in Jiangxi Province has scaled up the program to another 5,000 firms, about half the average number of new firms created in a year.

**HEALTH**

Videos encouraging communities to speak out about and counter violence against women led to a reduction in reported incidents of violence in Uganda. Short videos were screened in local video halls, depicting deadly violence by a husband towards his wife and appealed to viewers to speak out about violence against women in order to prevent it from escalating. Eight months later, the proportion of women who reported any VAW in their household over the preceding six months was substantially lower in villages where the videos were screened than in villages randomly assigned to the comparison group.

**FINANCIAL INCLUSION**

Simply expanding access to formal savings accounts had no impact on financial health in Chile, Ghana, and the Philippines. Previous research found access to bank accounts had various positive impacts when offered to certain groups, but effects on the average unbanked household were not known. In three countries, a representative group of households were offered temporarily free, basic savings accounts with a local bank. Access to the accounts spurred little account use and had no impact on savings, expenditures, earnings, or school enrollment after two years. These results suggest that expanding access to existing savings products may not improve well-being for an average household without a bank account.

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Relevant information from the image:

**Revenue**
- $42.5 million

**Expenses**
- $38.3 million

** Contributions**
- $5.5 million (12.9%)

**Grants & Contracts**
- $37 million (87.1%)

**Project Development & Fundraising**
- $1 million (2.5%)

**Operations & Financial Management**
- $5.7 million (15%)

**Research Projects**
- $29.7 million (77.4%)

**Research Support & Training**
- $0.3 million (0.9%)

**Global Communications & Policy**
- $1.6 million (4.2%)

**Net Assets**
- End of 2016: $(4.12 million)
- End of 2017: $0.07 million
- Change in Net Assets: $4.19 million

IPA’s 2017 fiscal year covered January 1 to December 31, 2017. Percentages are calculated using exact amounts rather than rounded amounts. See our audited financials at poverty-action.org/financials.

IPA has been recognized as a gold-level GuideStar participant, demonstrating our commitment to transparency. We are also a BBB Accredited Charity and one of The Life You Can Save’s top recommended charities for effective giving.
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