INNOVATIONS FOR POVERTY ACTION
PEACE AND RECOVERY PROGRAM
Guiding Principles and Funding Priorities

Updated: December 2020.
This document is frequently updated. Please refer to the latest version, here.

IPA's Peace & Recovery Program (P&R) supports field experiments and related research in several broad areas:

● Reducing violence and promoting peace
● Reducing “fragility” (i.e. fostering state capacity)
● Preventing, coping with, and recovering from crises, focusing on conflict but including non-conflict humanitarian crises such as COVID-19

This document covers the aims, core themes, research questions, and focus countries for our competitive research fund, supported by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) and the Open Society Foundations (OSF). Please send all inquiries to peace@poverty-action.org

Academic Leadership and Staff

• Christopher Blattman, Academic Lead, University of Chicago
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I. Competitive Fund Overview
P&R's sixth call for proposals is currently open. Proposals are due November 20, 2020.

Through our competitive fund, we support the following types of research:

• Exploratory work, contributing to the development of impact evaluations
• Pilot studies, for the purpose of informing full impact evaluations
• Full studies, including randomized evaluations, long-term follow-ups, downstream studies, and, in exceptional cases, high-quality natural experiments
• “Infrastructure” and “public good” creation, involving the creation of new data and measurement tools that will be public goods for the research community
• Reviews and meta-analysis of relevant literatures, including but not necessarily limited to program evaluation evidence
• Evidence and policy outreach support, for the purpose of establishing relationships, supporting the take-up and dissemination of evidence, sharing and analyzing administrative data, and exploring opportunities for experimental evaluations

The program prioritizes studies that develop, illustrate, or test fundamental theories of peace, violence, and recovery, especially those that challenge common beliefs, pioneer innovative interventions, and produce evidence where little currently exists.

Further information about our funding criteria and application process can be found below and in our Application Instructions.
II. Beyond Simple Program Evaluation, to Generalizability and Innovation

First and foremost, this initiative aims to support the most innovative and generalizable studies in the study of peace and conflict. Naturally, it is difficult to generalize the results of any single evaluation. That said, some studies have more general lessons than others. We believe it is the studies that pursue “basic science” while at the same time answering important policy questions that will have the greatest intellectual and policy impacts in the long run.

For example, P&R prioritizes studies that help to develop, illustrate, or test fundamental theories of peace, violence, and recovery. This includes studies that illustrate or test foundational theories that have limited evidence. Take for example the idea of conflict arising from imperfect information, including a failure to internalize the costs of conflict. Saumitra Jha and Moses Shayo recently used experimental variation in exposure to stock markets in Israel-Palestine to argue that financial market exposure leads to learning and reevaluation of the economic costs of conflict. Another example comes from Chris Blattman, Alexandra Hartman and Rob Blair’s study of rural land disputes, and how interventions can foster skills and norms that reduce the information asymmetries, commitment problems, and bargaining breakdowns that lead to interpersonal violence.

This also includes studies that try to challenge common prior beliefs, and which would lead to new understandings of peace and recovery, new theories, or new programs and priorities. For example, recent studies in Chicago and Liberia used evaluations of cognitive behavioral therapy to show that skills of self-control and social identity are not only drivers of interpersonal violence, but also that these skills and identities are malleable in adults. Another example using random assignment comes from Sierra Leone. A common view holds that communities will self-heal and recover from conflict with the passage of time. Yet, truth and reconciliation implemented 10 years after the end of conflict were still found to reinstate social capital, challenging the idea that communities simply self-heal.

An alternate way to increase the generalizability of the study is to pioneer new techniques. For example, Betsy Levy Paluck and coauthors used an anti-violence program in high schools to study how social norm change moves through a social network. Abhijit Banerjee and coauthors recently studied the crime displacement effects of enforcement, structurally estimating the strategic response of criminals (drunk drivers) to police presence in Rajasthan. And, Leonardo Bursztyn, Michael Callen and coauthors elicited expressions of anti-Americanism in conflict-affected Pakistan. Other frontiers of experimentation include the measurement of spillovers, multi-country trials, and so forth. Thus, we will also prioritize new techniques that could and would likely be copied by other researchers.

Importantly, innovation can mean producing evidence where little exists, especially where little experimental work has been done. The past decade saw some of the first panel studies and randomized evaluations in areas with active or recent conflicts. There are still places and questions with little micro-level evidence, let alone experimental work. For example, Gary King, Jennifer Pan and Margaret Roberts studied Chinese repression (censorship) of social media postings through experimentation. Additional experimental work with militaries is another promising example, building on the quasi-experimental and theoretical work by Eli Berman, Jacob Shapiro and Joe Felter. To name just a few other examples, there is currently little international experimental research on: refugees; the psychological and behavioral roots of aggression, protests; non-violent social movements; building state capability in fragile states; ethnic and sectarian violence; humanitarian crisis response; de-radicalization; and the internal organization of armed groups.
Flagship programs of great national and international importance are also strong candidates for funding, although even here we encourage applicants to carefully consider generalizability. Strong examples include Michael Callen and James Long’s *study of election fraud prevention in Afghanistan*, or the studies on *women’s empowerment, political candidate selection*, and *direct democracy* that emerged from a series of experiments on Afghanistan's largest reconstruction program, by Andrew Beath and coauthors.

Finally, bringing new types of data or measurement to bear is also an important contribution, especially when those data will become available to others, they can be replicated in other contexts, or the measurement strategy can be mimicked by others. For example, Luke Condra and coauthors used *high-precision data on Afghan insurgents, tracking activity by hour and precise location*, allowing the authors to innovate in order to understand the production of election violence and how insurgent violence strategically undermines governments’ ability to function. James Habyarimana and coauthors *pioneered a variety of behavioral games for distinguishing between different mechanisms for inter-ethnic cooperation*. And Dan Corstange has demonstrated how *small cues and interviewer identity affect polling outcomes*, including the role of anti-Americanism in the Middle East. Other frontiers include new datasets, new forms of data (including “big data”), new behavioral measurement, and new survey modules. Note, however, that new data and measurement are definitely not necessary for funding, and are usually not sufficient. They will strengthen proposals where most needed or relevant.

### III. Core Research Themes and Questions

“Peace and recovery” covers a large range of questions, objectives, and programs related to violence, its prevention, and its response, as well as other types of “recovery” responses after human and natural disasters. An overview of many of the published and ongoing randomized evaluations on managing and preventing crime, violence, and conflict can be found [here](#). That said, the “micro-level” quantitative evidence is still modest, and there have been few randomized evaluations. As a result, this initiative is broad in its focus.

The initiative is focused on prevention, mitigation, responses to, and recovery strategies for most forms of social and political violence as well as humanitarian emergencies, including:

- International and civil wars
- State-supported violence and repression, from mass killings to police brutality
- Electoral violence
- Riots, protests, strikes, and other collective action (violent and nonviolent)
- Intergroup violence, including ethnic and sectarian violence
- Terrorism
- “Recovery” responses after violence or destruction, such as after civil war or natural disaster.

Our priority funding areas include, but are not limited to, the following:

**1. Participation and organization of violence.** One of the most common research questions is “who participates in violence?” or other forms of collective action, or alternatively what rehabilitates those who participated in the past. The bulk of existing evidence focuses on how economic incentives (wages, employment, etc.) affect individual decisions to participate. While we welcome further research along these lines, we especially encourage research along less explored lines, including:
• The role of relatively non-material incentives:
  o Collective decision-making and rewards (such as club goods)
  o Psychological and behavioral factors and interventions
  o The role of social relationships, networks, group dynamics, and social norms
  o Social alienation, dislocation, and injustice
• The internal organization of social movements and groups (armed or nonviolent), including questions of leadership, funding, organization, and internal principal-agent problems.
• The meaning and process of “radicalization”, under what circumstances extreme political views lead to violent actions, and whether extremist views and actions can be mitigated or prevented.

2. Social order without the state. Another important area of research is how social order is established and disputes resolved in the absence of external enforcement by third parties. Whether the subject is property disputes between households, rival ethnic groups, neighboring gangs, or communal governance of natural resources, people can compete peacefully without resorting to violence. Order arises from many sources, including social norms and other informal institutions, ingroup policing, methods and practices of communication, systems and rules of formal dispute resolution, and so forth.

3. State and institution building. While institutional reforms may be difficult to study using field experiments, we encourage innovation and attempts at studying these topics in fragile and conflict-affected states. Relevant topics include:

  • Reforms in the security, police and justice sectors
  • Strengthening the capability of state organizations and structures
  • Civil service reforms in fragile states
  • Formal and informal institutions to promote peaceful bargaining
  • Forms of international order, including peacekeeping and justice systems

4. Service delivery and development in unstable or violent contexts. We will consider proposals that study a different development process or outcome (health, education, good governance, etc.) but where violence or political instability fundamentally change the nature of the problem. In particular, we seek to fund those studies that for some reason would be unlikely to be funded by “regular” sources because of the violent context, have violence as a dependent variable, or can address some question of fundamental importance to the study of peace and recovery. This could include:

  • Aspects of effective public service delivery in fragile or violent contexts
  • Political participation, elections, corruption or leakages in fragile or violent contexts

5. Forced displacement. As the number of refugees and internally displaced people increases, we aim to support social and political research on the subject. In some sense, the key issues and broad questions have yet to be defined. But some important questions likely include:

  • How can societies absorb and integrate displaced populations socially and economically?
  • What are the impacts of refugees on local economies and political situations?
  • How does refugee service delivery differ from standard service delivery in local government and foreign assistance?
  • What methods of tracking and data collection are required for effective refugee research?
6. Rehabilitation and recovery from violence and building peace. In addition to understanding the causes and prevention of violence, we welcome studies that change our understanding of the effects of violence, how those shape behaviors, and how the worst effects are mitigated. Violence cannot be experimentally evaluated, of course, but we can study these questions using interventions that prevent or treat exposure to violence. Applicants may also identify other new ways to shed light on some important questions:

- The effects and treatment of conflict-related traumatic and sexual violence
- Rehabilitation of violent offenders—socially, psychologically, or economically
- Promoting reconciliation and justice, and other forms of social healing and peace building
- The relationship between violence and socio-political attitudes and behavior
- Educational and labor market impacts of violence (to the extent that large theoretical or conceptual advances over the large existing literature can be demonstrated)

7. Crisis prevention, response, and recovery. This program also supports more political and economic research into humanitarian crises in general, not only those that feature violence. For example, this may include studies on disaster preparedness, first response, famine prevention, or innovative insurance mechanisms. This can additionally include research on COVID-19 that speaks to the academic literature on crisis prevention, response, and recovery.

8. Homicide in Latin America and the Caribbean. With just eight percent of the world’s population, Latin America and the Caribbean account for over a third of all homicides. To date, little evidence exists on what kinds of programs and policies can contribute to a reduction in this rate. To that end, we seek to fund some of the first rigorous studies, and policy and program pilots, on the impact of homicide and violence reduction interventions. This could include work on the following topics:

- Prevention strategies, such as efforts to enhance conflict resolution capacity in violent areas, strategies to displace or quell criminal groups, efforts to protect vulnerable groups (such as youth and women), and gun, drug, and alcohol control initiatives
- Interventions at the individual level, such as CBT for high-risk youth
- Enforcement, security provision and justice sector strategies, including focused deterrence, hotspot policing, investigations, prosecutions, and trials
- Reentry, including strategies to rehabilitate and reintegrate offenders and perpetrators
- Studies that augment our understanding of homicide, such as work on individual motivations for participation in violence and homicide, or the role of criminal groups and networks in homicide

We encourage applicants to link their research to questions that they believe are of fundamental importance to our understanding of peace and recovery, rather than simply frame their study within this incomplete list of questions.
IV. Types of Funding

The P&R Program will consider proposals for the following:

- **Exploratory grants:** These grants are to develop preliminary research ideas. We expect these grants to help researchers develop subsequent proposals for pilots or full randomized controlled trials (RCTs). Activities may include travel, relationship development, descriptive or observational analysis, and data development or collection. These grants are earmarked for junior faculty, PhD students, and other researchers who do not have other sources of funding for travel and exploratory work. Exploratory proposals from tenured professors from major research universities will not be considered. Awards are capped at $10,000.

- **Pilot studies:** These grants are for studies with a clear research question, but for which the design and implementation requires substantial upfront investments. The expectation is that this work helps researchers develop subsequent proposals for full RCTs. Activities could include further trial-and-error piloting; partner development; developing new measurement strategies or instruments; analysis of existing data; or new data development or collection. Awards are between $10,000 and $50,000. Projects should apply for the funds needed to yield the best research but (all other things equal) lower budgets have a higher probability of being funded.

- **Full studies:** These grants are for research projects with a clear research question, committed implementing partner(s), well-defined research designs, and statistical power estimates. While most of the impact evaluations funded will be RCTs, studies that use high-quality natural experiments will be considered in exceptional cases when a randomized experiment is not possible. Grants can also fund the continuation or completion of RCTs that have already started without P&R funding (including those for which data collection is complete). This includes long-run follow-ups from previously published evaluations, as well as "downstream studies" that use an already-completed randomized trial to answer a P&R-relevant question. The expectation is that this work will result in a paper publishable in a top economic, political science, or science journal. Awards are between $50,000 and $450,000. Projects should apply for the funds needed to yield the best research but (all other things equal) lower budgets have a higher probability of being funded.

- **"Infrastructure" and "public goods" creation:** This includes the creation of administrative datasets, panel datasets, other new data, software, measurement strategies, and so forth. Projects will represent a public good for the research community, with data or tools that can be applied towards a range of purposes. Awards are between $10,000 and $150,000.

- **Reviews and meta-analysis of relevant literatures:** This includes but is not necessarily limited to the experimental program evaluation evidence. Awards are between $5,000 and $20,000.

- **Evidence use and policy outreach support:** These grants support development of relationships with policymakers, take-up and dissemination of evidence, sharing and analysis of administrative data, and exploration potential experimental evaluations. The funding could be used to embed a research staff member in an organization, produce preliminary scoping exercises to ensure interventions are context-appropriate, host matchmaking events or conferences, or other activities that achieve similar aims. Awards are capped at $25,000.
V. Having Impact

We believe this initiative will have been successful if the studies we fund change the conversation around peace and recovery. This means policymakers thinking differently about the problem and its solution, or academics changing their understanding of the subject and their research direction. Examples include studies that challenge the conventional wisdom on a subject, especially the theoretical priors that academics and policymakers typically bring to the problem; studies that generate many imitators and replications; and more research to understand the breadth of application, mechanisms, program design, etc.

The conversation does not change simply because of the power or persuasiveness of an academic article. We will expect grantees to work to change the conversation in both academic and policy circles. In addition to the usual publishing of an academic journal article and presenting in academic forums, we will expect grantees to budget both time and funds for timely and general distribution of ideas, and we will support grantees in achieving this goal.

Examples of desired outreach activities include short, accessible policy briefs available on the IPA or J-PAL websites in a timely manner; participation in IPA and J-PAL policy conferences; large-circulation newspaper op-eds; and large-circulation podcasts or blog posts.

VI. Funding Criteria

Evaluation Criteria. Proposals are reviewed by a rotating group of academic researchers. Projects are assessed against five, equally weighted evaluation criteria:

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<th>Evaluation Criteria</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<td>Academic contribution</td>
<td>Does the study make a significant contribution toward advancing knowledge in the field? Does it answer new questions or introduce novel methods, measures, or interventions? Is there academic relevance? How does the study compare with the existing body of research? Does the research strategy provide a bridge between a practical experiment and underlying economic theories?</td>
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<td>Policy relevance</td>
<td>Does the study address the priority questions outlined in the P&amp;R Guiding Principles and Funding Priorities document? Will results from the intervention have generalizable implications? How, if at all, will the “lessons learned” have relevance beyond this test case? Is there demand from policymakers for more/better information to influence their decisions in this area? Is there potential for the implementing partner to scale up this intervention?</td>
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<td>Technical design</td>
<td>Does the research design appropriately answer the questions outlined in the proposal? Are there threats that could compromise the validity of results? If so, does the proposal sufficiently address those threats? What changes could the researchers make to improve the design? For full study proposals, are there sufficiently detailed power calculations?</td>
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Is the relationship with the implementing partner strong and likely to endure through the entire study? What is the credibility and policy influence of the implementing partner? Are there any other logistical or political obstacles that might threaten the completion of the study, for example, government authorization or Human Subjects review? For pilots, do researchers describe how piloting activities would inform a full-scale randomized evaluation? Does the research team have a track record of implementing successful projects similar to the one being proposed?

**Value of research**

Is the cost of the study commensurate with the value of expected contributions to science and policy? Does the study leverage funding from other sources?

**Researcher Qualifications.** At least one researcher per project must be affiliated with an academic institution or university, and either hold a PhD or be currently pursuing a PhD in a relevant discipline. They must demonstrate experience in field research and randomized evaluations and have sector expertise. Successful applications will come from researchers with a track record of published field experiments in top outlets.

Practitioners and institutions that implement interventions should partner with academics with strong track records implementing similar research studies in order to apply for funding. IPA’s P&R Program is available to support matchmaking with researchers.

**Research Management.** Submissions proposing to conduct field-based data collection should specify the research implementing partner organization that will assist the research team with the management and implementation of the study. The organization must demonstrate experience implementing field experiments and have a presence in the country.

Projects taking place in countries where IPA has a **country program** (see list at the bottom of this document) are expected to be run through the local IPA Country Office, as these offices have the experience and long-term presence to ensure that projects meet excellent research quality standards, maintain strong partner relationships, and integrate with the work of the P&R Program and IPA as a whole. Applicants should provide a clear motivation if they choose to work with another research management organization in a country where IPA is present. Please make sure that you reach out to the local IPA Country Office as early as possible in the project development process so they can assist with research design, project planning, proposal development, and partner development. If you need assistance reaching out to IPA Country Offices, please email us at peace@poverty-action.org.

In Latin America, researchers interested in implementing projects outside of the countries where IPA has an office are encouraged to reach out to IPA’s Peru office, as there may be opportunities for IPA Peru to support projects with quality assurance and research management remotely.

When conducting research in a country without an IPA Country Office, another research implementing organization must manage fieldwork. If the applicant is not already in touch with a research implementing organization, the P&R Program may be able to assist in identifying an appropriate partner.
**Funding.** Funding is for qualified research costs. The P&R Program generally cannot fund:

- Program or intervention implementation costs, except in extremely rare circumstances
- Salary costs for researchers from institutions in developed countries (funding for the salaries and/or time of researchers from institutions in developing countries will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the review committee)
- Purely qualitative research that does not contribute to the development of impact evaluations
- Lab in the field or survey experiments, except in rare circumstances or within the context of a broader impact evaluation
- Impact evaluations of psychological programming for victims of conflict or violence, given the relative availability of such funding
- Research using historical datasets, except in the context of a broader impact evaluation
- Research in high-income countries (please see Section VIII below for further information about our geographical restrictions)

P&R is unable to fund projects focused on homicide in Latin America and the Caribbean that have already received funding from the Open Society Foundations.

Further information about our funding criteria and application process can be found in our most recent Application Instructions. If you have any further questions, please reach out to peace@poverty-action.org.

**VII. Timeline and Application Process**

**Dates for Round VI**
- October 2020: Competitive Round Announced
- November 20, 2020: Full proposal submission deadline
- February 2021: Awards announced

**Off-cycle proposals.** While most of the funding will be disbursed through scheduled funding rounds, we understand that some research projects face significant time constraints and need to receive funding before the end of a regular funding round to make use of an unanticipated opportunity (e.g., a newly-announced policy change that will go into effect soon, creating an opportunity for an evaluation). The maximum amount awarded to off-cycle proposals is $50,000. We encourage researchers in such situations to reach out directly to peace@poverty-action.org.

**VIII. Focus Countries**

Proposals related to the first seven core research themes will be eligible for funding from the UK Department for International Development (DFID). A majority of DFID funding must be spent in DFID priority countries. We will be able to consider projects outside of this regional scope, provided they are in fragile states or fragile regions in moderately stable states, but these will have a lower probability of funding. Please refer to Section XI of this document for a list of DFID priority countries, countries with an IPA country office, and the overlap between the two. This funding cannot support research in high income countries.

Proposals related to the eighth core research theme, homicide in Latin America and the Caribbean, will be eligible for funding from the Open Society Foundations (OSF). Only projects in Latin America and
the Caribbean are eligible. While we would be particularly excited to receive proposals for projects in Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Jamaica, and the Northern Triangle (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras), proposals for projects across the region will be considered.

IX. Relationship with Other Funding Initiatives

The majority of the funding for the Peace & Recovery Program comes from the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO, formerly DFID), which has approved £12m of UK Aid for three initiatives. The funding supports J-PAL’s Governance Initiative and Crime and Violence Initiative (CVI), and IPA’s Peace & Recovery Program. The Peace & Recovery Program also receives funding from the Open Society Foundations (OSF) for projects on violence and homicide reduction in Latin America; these funds are shared with CVI and administered by P&R.

As can be seen from the CVI guidelines, the two funding initiatives share the same geographic focus and emphasis on supporting innovation and basic research that maximizes generalizability (and with it broad policy relevance). The priority questions are highly overlapping, although the CVI has a much greater emphasis on crime and criminal justice issues.

Importantly, IPA’s funding is open to all academic researchers, whereas J-PAL’s funding is restricted to J-PAL affiliates and special invitees. If you are uncertain about which initiative to apply to, please email peace@poverty-action.org.

X. About Innovations for Poverty Action

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 its 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.

IPA operates in over 22 countries through 18 permanent offices.

XI. DFID Priority Countries and IPA Country Offices

Below is a list of DFID priority countries, countries with an IPA country office, and the overlap between the two. Projects taking place in countries where IPA has a country office are generally expected to be run through the local IPA Country Office. Applicants should reach out to these country offices early in the proposal stage.
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<th>DFID Priority Country</th>
<th>IPA Country Office</th>
<th>IPA Contact Name</th>
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<td><a href="mailto:celuemunor@poverty-action.org">celuemunor@poverty-action.org</a></td>
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<td><a href="mailto:sdemarco@poverty-action.org">sdemarco@poverty-action.org</a></td>
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<td><a href="mailto:samadu@poverty-action.org">samadu@poverty-action.org</a></td>
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For work in Latin America outside of the countries listed above, you may also contact Juan Manuel Hernández-Agramonte at jmhernandez@poverty-action.org.