

# Rwanda



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 to ensure that both the evidence created and data collected is used to improve the lives of the world's poor. We also empower our partners to strengthen their monitoring, learning, and evaluation capabilities. Since our founding in 2002, IPA has worked with over 575 leading academics to conduct over 650 evaluations in 51 countries. Future growth will be concentrated in focus countries, such as Rwanda, where we have local and international staff, established relationships with government, NGOs, and the private sector, and deep knowledge of local issues.

## More Evidence

In Rwanda, we have continued our global tradition of rigorous, applicable research by building foundational research capacity and conducting evaluations in areas of pressing national concern. Examples of our work below offer promising insights into everyday issues that affect the lives of the Rwandan poor.

### HEALTH | SOCIAL PROTECTION

**How do standard development programs compare to just giving people cash?** IPA Rwanda worked with researchers to rigorously evaluate the impact of modest unconditional cash transfers compared to an integrated nutrition and WASH program. Neither the program nor the equivalent amount of cash impacted dietary diversity, child and maternal anemia, child growth, wealth, or consumption. A much larger cash transfer had positive impacts on household dietary diversity, height-for-age, child mortality, consumption, savings, assets, and home values.

**How does an employment and training program compare to giving people cash?** Researchers worked with IPA to evaluate the impacts and cost effectiveness of a youth employment program, cash grants of equal cost.

After 18 months, the training program improved productive hours, assets, savings, and subjective well-being. The cost-equivalent cash transfers improved all these outcomes as well as consumption, income, and wealth.

**Responding to COVID-19** To understand the reach of the COVID-19 crisis in Rwanda, we conducted two rounds of surveys as part of the Research for Effective COVID-19 Responses (RECOVR) program. The survey collected information on health, food security and financial resilience, education, and economic activity and employment. **The findings informed policy recommendations related to Rwanda's COVID-19 response.**

### AGRICULTURE

**How can we improve the sustainability of irrigation systems?** Sustainability and coordination problems often plague large-scale irrigation schemes. This study evaluates the impact of irrigation on farming practices and farmer welfare and compares group management structures. This research has the potential to inform the Ministry of Agriculture's policies to improve use and coordination of irrigation systems.

## IPA RWANDA

Since 2013

### FOCUS SECTORS

Agriculture  
Education  
Finance  
Health  
Social Protection

### RESEARCH PROJECTS

10 Completed, 8 in Progress

### KEY PARTNERS

Government of Rwanda, Educate!, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Education Development Center, GiveDirectly, International Growth Centre, Nuru Energy, U.S. Agency for International Development, University of Cape Town (UCT), University of California, Berkeley, Georgetown University, World Bank – DIME

### KEY RESEARCHERS

Moussa Blimpo (World Bank), Andrew Brudevold-Newman (World Bank), Craig McIntosh (University of California, San Diego), Maria Jones (DIME), Florence Kondylis (DIME), Todd Pugatch (Oregon State University), Pieter Serneels (University of East Anglia), Diego Ubfal (World Bank), Martine Visser (UCT), Andrew Zeitlin (Georgetown University)

## One way that farmers can improve their income and livelihoods is to transition from subsistence farming to commercial agriculture.

Leveraging data from the Rwandan Agricultural Board, surveys, and Africa Improved Foods (AIF)— a processor in Rwanda—, researchers are evaluating the effects of access to AIF on farmers' investment in productivity-enhancing inputs.

## Better Programs & Policies

IPA Rwanda is **transitioning from its 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.**

With our newly established embedded lab in the Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB), we have strengthened administrative data collection, organization, and accessibility. We have leveraged our close relationship with the REB to improve access to and understanding of evidence on education. We are now co-creating research agendas and evaluations, and supporting the use of data for operational management and program design.

### EDUCATION

Rwanda is one of the top-performing countries in sub-Saharan Africa in terms of access to education. Recruiting and retaining qualified, skilled, and motivated teachers to improve education quality is a priority for the country. **IPA has partnered with the REB and Ministry of Education to evaluate how pay-for-performance contracts in public schools impact student learning through the Supporting Teacher Achievement in Rwandan Schools (STARS) program.** IPA is also supporting the process of centralizing teacher recruitment and management and enhancing the national comprehensive assessment for teachers.

Working with the REB and Educate!-- a nonprofit organization tackling youth unemployment-- researchers examined **the impact of a teacher training and support program on teacher pedagogy and student outcomes.** Preliminary results showed positive impacts on students' soft skills and university attendance. Two years after the program began, researchers found positive impacts on teaching and increased student engagement in business activities.

**The transition from school to the labor market is a crucial step in the life of young people.** In collaboration with the Rwanda Development Board, we are evaluating whether soft-skills training after graduation from university can improve youth labor market outcomes and whether these outcomes differ by gender.

### FINANCE

**Well-designed financial education programs have the potential to improve financial knowledge and behavior.** IPA partnered with the Ministry of Finance and the World Bank to evaluate the Financial Education through Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations (SACCOs) program. When SACCOs were able to choose trainers from the local community, members attended more sessions and improved their financial knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.

## Our Future

We are focusing on two goals:

1. **Reinforce IPA's status as a known source of high-quality research.** We continue to bring our expertise in high-quality impact evaluations to Rwanda, providing the capacity to run rigorous evaluations across sectors. We work together with knowledgeable government and academic partners through the concept and design stage to ensure that the evidence provides rigorous, meaningful results for decision-makers.
2. **Partner with decision-makers to seek, generate, and apply evidence at scale to help the poor.** IPA will work together with our close partner, the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), to train policymakers on what kind of evidence is needed in which decisions, how to determine what evidence is rigorous, and how to use evidence to guide programs and policies. We seek to work together with Rwandan and international researchers to both provide opportunities for local academics to build and apply their skills and to make our evidence more relevant to the local policy context. IPA also supports decision-makers in applying this evidence along the path to scale.

Building a world with **More Evidence** and **Less Poverty.**

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IPA evidence has already contributed to improving millions of lives. Now, with 18 years of evidence to build on, our programs are increasingly focusing on government and partner collaboration to translate evidence into better programs and policies.