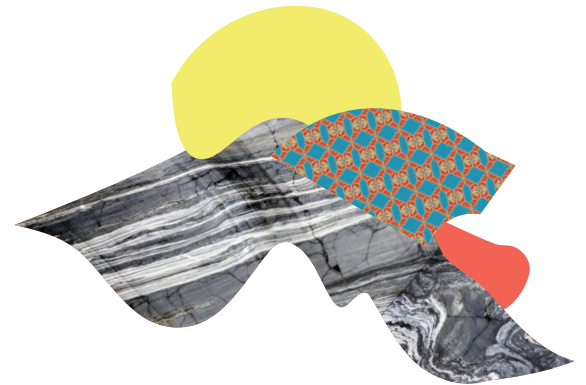


Socio-economic Inequality in India: Causes and Consequences

June 5-7, 2024 | Goettingen



WORKSHOP SUMMARY





Background

The workshop on “*Socioeconomic Inequality in India: Causes and Consequences*” was held from June 5 to 7, 2024, at Aula, Waldweg 26, Goettingen. This event aimed to gather researchers and practitioners to discuss the diverse aspects of socioeconomic inequality in India.

The agenda included presentations on gender, caste, and economic disparities and their impacts on education, health, and labour markets. The workshop also featured storytelling in research and collaborative project discussions. The goal was to enhance understanding, identify actionable strategies, and foster collaboration among participants to address socioeconomic inequalities.



Highlights

..... DAY 1 JUNE 5

Welcome Session

Prof. Sebastian Vollmer, Director of the Centre for Modern Indian Studies at the University of Goettingen inaugurated the workshop with a short welcome address. Through an interactive round of introductions, participants had a chance to talk one-on-one, getting to know each other and re-connecting. This activity set the tone for the remaining program, which provided ample opportunity for participants to network and share their work.

PRESENTATIONS



GARIMA AGARWAL

Assistant Professor (Economics),
Azim Premji University

Safety Concerns and Girls' School Participation

Garima Agarwal's presentation focused on the effects of heightened safety concerns for girls on their school attendance following a widely known case of sexual violence against women, the Nirbhaya gangrape of New Delhi. The incident took place on a private bus and the route taken by the vehicle can be used to identify school-level exposure to the event based on distance from the route. Using data from public schools in Delhi, she compared daily attendance of girls and boys in the same grade before and after the incident, accounting for seasonal attendance patterns using data from previous academic years. Valuable suggestions on triangulation and validation of school exposure to the event through other complementary sources, such as NCRB data were made during the presentation.

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SOPHIE OCHMANN

Consultant, World Bank and
Research Associate, Youth Impact

The Influence of COVID-19 on Young Women's Labor Market Aspirations and Expectations in India

Sophie Ochmann presented a paper in which she explores whether exposure to the COVID-19 pandemic influenced labour market aspirations and expectations of female vocational students in Haryana, India. This research is motivated by the key policy challenges presented by youth unemployment and gender gaps in labour market outcomes across developing countries. Young job seekers may struggle to find jobs because of their biased beliefs and unrealistic aspirations about the labour market. They find that exposure to the pandemic lowered young women's age aspirations and made them more realistic, especially in rural areas. A potential mechanism for these effects is the decline in rural women's willingness to migrate for work due to the pandemic.

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DEEPAK MALGHAN

Assistant Professor (Public Policy),
Indian Institute of Management
Bangalore



Caste Inequality in Occupational Exposure to Heat Waves in India

Deepak Malghan's presentation delved into caste inequality regarding occupational exposure to heat waves in India. He emphasised the severe impact of rising temperatures on demographic and economic dynamics, noting India's vulnerability to intense and frequent heat waves. Using PAIReD methodology combining satellite data and demographic insights, Deepak analysed how caste influences heat stress exposure during recent heat waves. He utilised datasets like PLFS and CPHS to map occupational exposure across districts, revealing significant disparities. The study highlighted caste's pivotal role in shaping vulnerability to climate impacts, framing it as a demographic and environmental justice issue.

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DAMINI SINGH

Stephan Klasen Fellow,
University of Goettingen



Impact of Air Pollution on Cognitive Performance in India

Damini Singh's presentation focused on the impact of air pollution on children's cognitive performance in India. She highlighted India's severe air quality issues, particularly in its cities, and discussed how pollution adversely affects health, including increased mortality and impaired brain function. Damini posed a central question: whether air pollution harms cognitive performance in Indian children, noting a gap in research despite evidence from developed nations. Her study used data from the Indian Human Development Survey and satellite measurements of PM2.5 levels, employing a rigorous analysis method to explore this relationship.

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SHARON BUTEAU

Executive Director,
LEAD at Krea University

How can Financial Exclusion be Understood through Digital Payments: An India Perspective

In her presentation, Sharon Buteau discussed socio-economic inequality in India, highlighting advancements in digital infrastructure with 1.38 billion Aadhaar IDs, 515 million new Jan Dhan accounts, and over 12 billion UPI transactions in December 2023. Despite this progress, challenges like inactive bank accounts, with only 14% savings and 13% formally borrowed, remain. She noted disparities in financial activity, mobile phone ownership, and internet usage, emphasising the gender gap. Sharon emphasised the need for active bank account usage and equitable digital access to prevent marginalisation, seeing potential in leveraging digital trails to support micro enterprises.

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DAY 2 JUNE 6



DOMINIK NAEHER

Postdoctoral Researcher,
University of Goettingen

General vs. Tailored Information for Technology Adoption: Evidence from a Cluster Randomized Controlled Trial in India

Dominik Naeher covered the impact of general versus tailored information on technology adoption in India's wheat belt region. The researcher discussed the motivation behind the study, preliminary work, and the design of a cluster-randomised controlled trial. The trial aimed to determine whether providing tailored information to farmers, as opposed to general information, would be more effective in promoting the adoption of new technologies, particularly in the context of increasing heatwaves. The presentation concluded with findings and implications for improving technology dissemination strategies in agriculture.

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DIKSHA SINGH


Associate Director - Communications & Outreach, LEAD at Krea University



Storytelling in Research

Diksha Singh presented the effective use of storytelling to enhance the resonance of research and policy communications. The presentation emphasised the role of narratives in shaping understanding and influencing action, particularly in addressing socio-economic inequality in India. It discussed how storytelling can capture attention amidst information overload and engage audiences by framing data and evidence within compelling narratives. Diksha highlighted the importance of authenticity and complexity in storytelling, urging communicators to avoid oversimplification. The presentation concluded with practical strategies for crafting impactful stories that drive meaningful change and challenge existing narratives in policy and media spheres.

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PASCALE COMBES MOTEL


Professor, School of Economics and LEO, Université Clermont Auvergne



Forest Conservation Policies in the Kitchen: When Protected Areas Influence Household Fuel Choices in Tanzania

The presentation by Pascale Combes Motel and Jean-Louis Combes examined how forest conservation policies affect household fuel choices in Tanzania. It addressed the issue of low electricity access (32.8%) leading to 85% of households relying on biomass, which caused significant deforestation. The researchers discussed findings that showed proximity to protected areas influenced households to adopt less environmentally damaging cooking fuels. The presentation emphasised the need to integrate forest conservation efforts with policies to expand electricity access and promote sustainable cooking alternatives to protect Tanzania's forests and biodiversity.

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JEAN-LOUIS COMBES

Professor, School of Economics and LEO, Université Clermont Auvergne



LEONARD KRAPF

Doctoral Student (Economics),
University of Goettingen



Seeds of Productivity: Evidence from Colonial-Induced Migration in Rural Togo

Leonard Krapf's presentation focused on the preliminary findings of their project concerning the social and economic consequences of rural-to-rural migration in Togo. It explored the historical context of forced labour resettlement introduced during colonial rule, particularly examining the case of the Kabiyé and Losso ethnic groups from the mountainous north of Togo. These groups, characterised by high fertility rates and limited resources, were compelled to relocate to more fertile areas in central to southern Togo. The presentation aimed to uncover the long-term economic and cultural implications of this migration pattern.

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SANTANU PRAMANIK

Research Director,
LEAD at Krea University



Characterizing the Utilization Trends of Health Insurance in India

Santanu Pramanik shared insights on health insurance utilisation in India, focusing on gender disparities and the impact of the Rajiv Aarogyasri scheme in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Using claims data, preliminary analyses revealed notable variations in hospitalisation patterns and expenditure between men and women, against a backdrop of increasing national health insurance coverage. Santanu highlighted the ongoing challenge of socio-economic inequalities that continue to shape healthcare accessibility across diverse demographics in India. The research underscores the need for gender-sensitive health care policies and equitable insurance coverage across India.

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ANNA REUTER

Postdoctoral Researcher,
University Clinic Heidelberg



Predicting Control of Cardiovascular Disease Risk Factors in South Asia

In the presentation, Anna Reuter explored the development of risk scores to predict the 12-month risk of not meeting cardiovascular disease (CVD) care goals in patients with diabetes residing in South Asia. The research employed machine learning techniques on data collected from two harmonised, randomised controlled trials conducted in India and Pakistan. The focus was on identifying readily available or easily obtainable predictors during routine care visits to ensure the resulting risk score calculators could be widely implemented in clinical settings.

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MAJA-EMILIA MARCUS

Postdoctoral Researcher,
Brigham and Women's Hospital and
Harvard Medical School



HIV Prevention in Aging Populations

Maja-Emilia Marcus presented research on HIV prevention among ageing populations in India and South Africa. The overview covered the evolving HIV landscape in these regions, focusing on tailored prevention strategies for middle-aged and older adults. Maja discussed the use and challenges of HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) in older populations, addressing barriers to its adoption. The presentation addressed significant barriers hindering the widespread adoption of PrEP in these populations, including socio-cultural factors, economic constraints, and healthcare accessibility issues. Maja underscored the necessity of overcoming these challenges to improve PrEP uptake and reduce HIV transmission rates effectively among ageing populations in diverse socio-cultural contexts.

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PREETHI RAO

Director - Partnerships & Outreach,
LEAD at Krea University



Collaborative Philanthropy and Stakeholder Engagement to Address Socioeconomic Inequalities

Preethi Rao emphasised the power of pooling resources and expertise from diverse stakeholders in her presentation on collaborative philanthropy and socioeconomic inequality solutions. She highlighted collaborative philanthropy's capacity to drive systemic change and address developmental challenges effectively, leveraging integrated solutions and multi-stakeholder collaboration. Preethi spotlighted the importance of defining shared goals, building trust, and utilising technology to enhance collaborative processes. Her insights underscored the need for targeted interventions to support underserved segments like women entrepreneurs, advocating for scalable models and robust data-driven strategies to foster sustainable impact.

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SABRINA RHODE

Doctoral Student,
University of Goettingen



Introduction to the SDG Partnership Project

Sabrina Rhode presented the Interdisciplinary SDG-Semester Course "Sustainable Global Health." This course is part of a DAAD-funded SDG-Partnerships programme and a collaborative initiative between the University of Goettingen in Germany, the Universitas Syiah Kuala in Indonesia, and the Université d'Antananarivo in Madagascar. It follows a blended learning approach with remote learning during the semester and summer schools at all partner universities. Sabrina introduced the project goals and talked about challenges that occurred during the first phases of the project.

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CLAUDIA MÄHLER

Professor, Institute for Psychology, University of Hildesheim



Feasibility Study of Cognitive Developmental Assessment in Preschool Children in Bihar

Claudia Mahler, Ronja Runje and Charlotte Gronemann presented insights from a pre-visit to Madhepura, Bihar, to assess the feasibility of a cognitive development assessment in pre-school children. They first screened the literature for instruments measuring cognitive development in children and finally selected two tools that were developed in/for low and middle income countries, DEEP and IDELA. These tools were then tested with children to identify tools suitable for measuring cognitive development as part of a possible future data collection.



RONJA RUNGE

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CHARLOTTE GRONEMANN

Student Assistant, Institute for Psychology, University of Hildesheim



NADINE DÖNNECKE

Postdoctoral Researcher,
Institute of Psychology,
University of Hildesheim



Cross-cultural Assessment of Early Childhood Development with the FREDI

Nadine Dönnecke's presentation focused on the measurement of early childhood development. For the evaluation of a book-sharing intervention in Bihar, she designed a development assessment tool based on an existing German assessment tool. She emphasised the need to adjust the tool to the local context. After applying the tool in Germany and Bihar, she tested the measurement invariance of the tool across the two contexts. She found that the developmental construct could be measured across samples in the same way, but that meaningful comparability of test scores across samples was not possible.

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SUNIL KANWAR

Professor, Department of Economics,
Delhi School of Economics



Innovation and Government Bureaucracy

Sunil Kanwar presented a paper that explores the nexus between innovation and actual bureaucratic performance rather than bureaucratic capacity. Using a conditional difference in differences estimation based on an unbalanced panel of nations spanning the period 2004-2018, he provided strong evidence that better bureaucratic performance underlies better innovation outcomes, *ceteris paribus*. Moreover, he discussed how this effect is heterogeneous, with this response becoming more pronounced at higher percentiles of the knowledge capital stock.

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JOHN VICTOR KUMAR

Senior Technical Expert
(Entrepreneurship),
LEAD at Krea University



Ethics in Research and Collaboration

John Victor Kumar emphasised the importance of research ethics in his presentation. He highlighted principles such as informed consent, privacy, respect for autonomy, beneficence, and participant safety. He stressed the significance of privacy and confidentiality, especially for vulnerable groups, and addressed digital ethics under India's Digital Personal Data Protection Act of 2023. John also emphasised local collaboration, clear communication, and agreements, providing practical ethical guidance for field data collection. All participants applied his input to several case studies, reflecting on ethical dilemmas.

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LE THI NGOC Tu

Head of the Research Affairs
and Science Journal,
Hoa Sen University



The Gender Employment Gap: The Effects of Extended Maternity Leave Policy in Vietnam

Le Thi Ngoc Tu's presentation centred on the narrowing gender employment gap, particularly among women with infants, based on analysis of Vietnam's extended maternity leave policy and its impact on the gender employment gap (GEG). In 2012, Vietnam extended maternity leave from four to six months, beyond the international standard of 14 weeks. Using the Difference-in-Differences (DID) method and data from 2008-2018, she found the extended leave did not worsen the GEG overall. However, industry-specific variations existed, with some sectors experiencing a narrowed gender gap. She noted women with infants still faced lower earnings and recommended further research on industry-specific impacts and earnings disparities.

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SNEHA LAMBA

Postdoctoral Research Fellow,
University of Goettingen



Effect of Access to Daycare on Parental Time Use in Bangladesh

Sneha Lamba focused on free daycare's impact on parental time use in rural Bangladesh. Highlighting gender disparities in time use aligned with UN's Sustainable Development Goal 5.4, her research examined how free daycare for children under five affected parents, especially mothers. Implemented in 2013 in seven subdistricts, the daycare aimed to reduce drowning incidents. The study, using a 2SLS model and household data, found daycare attendance increased mothers' paid work and leisure time, reducing unpaid domestic work, promoting gender equality.

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NINA EISENBURGER

Project Coordinator, Chair of
Development Economics
University of Goettingen



Childhood Obesity in Mexico: The Parental Role in Physical Activity Patterns

Nina Eisenburger's presentation focused on parents' roles in shaping children's physical activity patterns to combat childhood obesity in Mexico. She highlighted the complexity of obesity, influenced by individual, social, and macro-level factors, and discussed physical literacy, encompassing motivation, confidence, competence, and knowledge for lifelong physical activity. Emphasising parenting practices like role modelling and parental self-efficacy, Nina showed how parents' activity, support, and encouragement impact children. She concluded that increasing parental awareness and involvement is crucial for preventing and controlling childhood obesity.

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This event was supported by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, Germany and coordinated by Dr. Lisa Bogler, Research Associate & Postdoctoral Fellow, Chair of Development Economics / CeMIS, University of Goettingen. Her research deals with health and education in low- and middle-income countries.

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