

Category : International Rice Research Conference

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Title of Entry : Caste, Technology and Social Network

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Abstract : Social networks influence technology diffusion but targeting formal leaders (institutional central nodes) lead to distributional consequences. This paper analyzes the role of informal social networks in technology diffusion in a socially hierarchical caste-based society. Often, information and technology diffusion are constrained by social and economic boundaries where informal nodes such as caste plays a very decisive role in everyday life as well as in the political and policy fabric of the regional, state, and national system. Proper targeting and dissemination of technology to the marginalized sections of society are very important for their development. Taking diffusion of improved rice varieties as an example, we analyze whether technology diffusion is concentrated within caste-based social networks or whether it can break those informal caste boundaries and spread across social networks. We found that informal networks tend to concentrate within caste-based groups and hence observed significantly stronger social networks within caste than across caste categories. Minorities had a very strong network within the community, but weak networks across different caste groups. Strong within caste networks discourages hybrids but facilitates stabilized technologies such as improved varieties whereas strong across caste networks discourages adoption of older and traditional varieties. It is important to highlight that the existence of stronger within as well as across caste networks for scheduled tribes (STs) facilitated these marginalized communities to adopt improved and hybrid varieties.

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