

Category	: International Rice Research Conference
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Title of Entry	: The Causal Effect of Public Infrastructure on Women's Empowerment in Rural Rice Farming Communities of India
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Affiliation 2	: International Rice Research Institute (IRRI)
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Abstract : Women experience gender gaps in many aspects of their lives due to social and structural barriers. When looking at rural rice farming households in India, these gaps are far from negligible. In much of the developing world, women have been found to participate less in labour markets, own fewer resources and play a smaller role in the allocation of household resources (Udry 1996; World Bank 2012). Meanwhile, women and men exhibit differing preferences, goals, and opportunity costs. These gender differences have been shown to have large implications for household welfare; particularly, raising women's power has been shown to have positive effects on a range of household outcomes such as crop production and children's human capital (Basu 2006; Duflo, 2003). Interventions to remove the barriers faced by women in India have been both gender-sensitive and gender-neutral. However, the difficulties in identifying the nature of discrimination and disempowerment have limited the effectiveness of gender-sensitive interventions (Deaton 1989). In recent years, NGOs and government organizations have emphasized the importance of gender-neutral interventions, like investments in infrastructure development (Alderman, 1991). Due to selection bias and endogeneity issues in the evaluation of these interventions empirical evidence has been hard to garner. The goal of this study is to examine whether and to what extent rural roads have disproportionately affected women's intra- and extra-household power in India; either by further alienating women's "say" or by increasing women's opportunities relative to men's. Therefore we will develop a theoretical model of intra-household bargaining power, and evaluate the causal impact of rural infrastructure development on women's empowerment in rice farming households in India. To this end, a novel econometric approach based on a "Regression Discontinuity" design based on the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PGMSY) guidelines will be used (Asher & Novosad, 2017). We rely on two datasets: a socioeconomic survey completed by the International Rice Research Institute with gender specific information (2,699 households), and a detailed accounting of rural roads provided by the PGMSY program for the purposes of this study. Our research is the first to evaluate how roads affect women's power relative to men.

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