



**EPoD in Nepal, March 2017:**  
*Bringing researchers and policymakers together  
in the use of evidence for better government*

**Evidence for Policy Design (EPoD)**, a policy research and implementation initiative based at Harvard Kennedy School, will be conducting a set of activities in Kathmandu, Nepal in March to advance the use of data and research evidence in policymaking across South Asia. The scope of activities will range from laying the groundwork for a sustainable model for **training** local bureaucrats in the use of evidence, to **matching** government officials to researchers who can assist them in the design and testing of policy. The events will culminate with a **public program – Smart Policy for Women’s Economic Empowerment – on 23 March** featuring international researchers in conversation with high-level policymakers from across the region.

- **For more information on any of these programs, please contact [EPoD@hks.harvard.edu](mailto:EPoD@hks.harvard.edu)**
- **Press inquiries: [vestal\\_mcintyre@hks.harvard.edu](mailto:vestal_mcintyre@hks.harvard.edu)**
- **Follow [@EPoDHarvard](#) and [#BCURENepal](#) on Twitter for updates**

**The BCURE program at Harvard: Development through Effective Policy**

For the past three and a half years, EPoD has been refining a model to help integrate data and research evidence into policy decision-making through the program Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence (BCURE): Data and Evidence for Smart Policy Design, funded by UK Aid from the UK Government. In India and Pakistan, EPoD piloted innovative activities to enable policymakers to apply analytical frameworks and effectively use evidence: blended online/classroom training, experiential learning pilots, custom data solutions, and policy dialogues that build networks of evidence champions in government. In 2015, EPoD extended its BCURE program into Nepal, gaining insights into how new models combining training and practice can support evidence-based policymaking there. March 2017 is a point of convergence for the Nepal program and BCURE as a whole.

**Training of Trainers: Building channels for sustainability across South Asia, March 15–17**

The BCURE program has allowed EPoD to develop an innovative teaching model combining a digital learning platform with in-person classroom sessions individually adapted to the learning needs of each cohort. Through a Training of Trainers program, this blended-learning model is being deployed in an increasingly scalable and sustainable manner within local training institutions. The content utilizes a series of six training modules that teach analytical frameworks and practical skills to evaluate and use data and research evidence in policy. The first event in Kathmandu will be the latest in a series of “Training of Trainers” courses, which will enable 25 graduates and other educators from Nepal, India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan to deliver the materials to trainees in their own institutions and countries. Senior instructors from several civil service academies will be in attendance.

**Training for Senior Policymakers from Nepal and Bangladesh: Practical Skills and Frameworks for Evidence-Informed Policy, March 20–23**

After successfully deploying the BCURE training model to over 1000 civil servants in Pakistan and several hundred in India, EPoD is bringing it to Nepal and Bangladesh. In conjunction with the Nepal Administrative Staff College (NASC) and the Nepal Planning Commission, instructors will deliver all six BCURE modules to around 40



civil servants from ministries as diverse as the Nepal Reconstruction Authority and the Bangladesh Ministry of Finance. Several participants from the Training of Trainers program will stay on to serve as facilitators for this session, allowing them to apply newly acquired insights and teaching techniques in a hands-on learning approach. Past trainings have made trainees more comfortable using evidence, and have yielded large increases in technical knowledge (0.31 standard deviations).



*Polymakers participate in a BCURE training exercise in Karachi, Pakistan.*

**Public Program, 23 March:**

**Smart Policy for Women's Economic Empowerment**

***Space is limited. Please email [RegionalDialogue@hks.harvard.edu](mailto:RegionalDialogue@hks.harvard.edu) if you would like to attend.***

On 23–24 March, in collaboration with the Institute for Financial Management and Research (IFMR-LEAD) in India and the Nepal Administrative Staff College, EPoD will host its first Regional Policy Dialogue, with the purpose of sharing cross-country knowledge on policies that empower women across South Asia. The event will begin with a public program on regional issues around female economic empowerment. Women's access to financial resources is linked to their overall empowerment and the wellbeing of others in the household, notably children. Research also strongly suggests that an economy grows faster when all the most able citizens, irrespective of gender, can enter the labor force.

- While across South Asia, men participate in the labor force at the same rate of around 80%, women's participation varies widely. At 27%, India's rate of female labor force participation (FLFP) is lower than any other country in the G20 except Saudi Arabia. The FLFP rates in Afghanistan and Pakistan are lower than India's, but rising. Meanwhile in Bangladesh and Nepal, which have comparable gender norms as parts of India, FLFP has hovered well above the international average for decades. *What can the policy leaders of these countries learn from each other?*
- South Asian governments are taking major steps to increase the poor's access to financial resources and economic opportunities, often through digital innovations like mobile money. *How can these initiatives not only be gender-inclusive, but also help grow women's economic empowerment?*



Speakers will include:



**Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury**, Speaker of Parliament for Bangladesh – who holds the dual distinction of being the first female and the youngest person to hold that office. In the past, Chaudhury served as State Minister for Women and Children Affairs.



**Bimala Rai Paudyal**, a former member of the Nepal Planning Commission with over 20 years' experience in teaching and policymaking, particularly in the areas of social protection, gender equality, and natural resource governance.



**Fauzia Viqar**, who serves as the first Chairperson of the Punjab Commission on the Status of Women in Pakistan, and has over 15 years' experience working with government and civil society organizations in the areas of gender- and race-based discrimination and promotion of women's empowerment.



**Rohini Pande**, EPoD Co-Director and Mohammed Kamal Professor of Public Policy at Harvard Kennedy School, who has published extensively on female empowerment in India, particularly through financial inclusion and increased labor force participation.



**Charity Troyer Moore**, who as Research Director for India at EPoD is currently implementing large-scale studies on how to increase take-up of skills training among young, rural women, and the positive effects of giving poor women bank accounts.

**...and further guests to be announced.**



**For more on the issues that will be covered:**

*“Nepal’s earthquake affected women more than men”*

[READ](#) an interview with Bimala Rai Paudyal on the India Water Portal website.

*“I realised that women had to face intersecting oppression”*

[READ](#) a profile of Fauzia Viqar in Dawn.

*“Women’s development is no longer an isolated issue, it is smart economics”*

[WATCH](#) Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury speak on Women and Technology at the 2012 International Women’s Conference.

*“Seemingly immutable norms can crumble when labour markets begin to properly value women’s work”*

[READ](#) Rohini Pande & Charity Troyer Moore in the New York Times.

*“The home remains the most dangerous place for Indian women”*

[READ](#) Rohini Pande on the economics of violence against women.

### **Matchmaking for Smart Policy Design and Implementation, 24 March**

The Policy Dialogue will also include a closed session the day following the public program, where EPoD-affiliated researchers and staff will introduce leaders of gender policy in South Asia to the Smart Policy Design & Implementation model, or SPDI, an iterative framework for applying evidence to all stages of the policy-research cycle. SPDI relies on economic theory and empirical analysis to identify policy-relevant research questions, diagnose potential underlying problems, and test and improve upon potential policy solutions. In small groups, the participants will apply the SPDI framework to real-world issues of women’s economic empowerment, then present their findings to the meeting at large.



Funding for the March 23–24 Policy Dialogue has been provided by UK Aid from the UK Government, the International Growth Centre (IGC) and the Women and Public Policy Program (WAPPP) at the Harvard Kennedy School.

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