



## SMART POLICY FOR WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

### AN EPoD REGIONAL GENDER POLICY DIALOGUE

Despite its recent economic growth, many South Asian economies continue to see relatively poor – and in some cases, declining – indicators for women's social and economic empowerment. Yet research shows that women's access to financial resources is correlated with their overall empowerment and benefits others in the household, notably children. At the same time, governments in the region 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 in the region?

On March 23 and 24, 2017, **Evidence for Policy Design** (EPoD) at the Harvard Kennedy School, in collaboration with IFMR LEAD in India, will bring together international scholars and policy actors from across South Asia in Kathmandu, Nepal, to share cutting-edge research on how government initiatives to increase financial access and economic opportunities are affecting the region's women, and to demonstrate practical applications of economic research in support of women's economic empowerment. A core goal of this event is to bridge the research-to-policy gap by identifying research questions of immediate relevance to policymakers and interest to researchers, and encouraging the development of synergistic research-policy collaborations that maximize the relevance of new research to policy and shorten the road to implementation. Convening dedicated stakeholders from multiple sectors in India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan will create an exciting forum for generating innovative evidence-based solutions to the obstacles to women's empowerment.

The dialogue will be divided into two programs: On Day 1, EPoD Co-Director and Mohammed Kamal Professor of Public Policy Dr. Rohini Pande will present opening remarks on how research evidence informs our understanding of women and economic empowerment, and how recent initiatives in financial inclusion may relate to these outcomes. The main event for the evening will be a panel discussion with prominent thought leaders in the region to discuss these challenges. Day 1 of the Dialogue will be open to individuals from the public, private, and non-profit sector in Nepal and throughout the region.

Day 2's activities will focus on connecting policymakers and scholars. EPoD-affiliated researchers and staff will introduce participants to EPoD's 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. Invited researchers will share key insights on women's outcomes for pre-selected policy topics: for example, direct benefits transfers, mobile money, and self-help groups. Policy stakeholders and researchers will spend the afternoon in preassigned groups to work through the SPDI framework as it applies to their topics of interest. This exercise will help researchers and policymakers identify policy areas where data and research have the potential to yield significant benefits, and to formulate specific research question(s) to explore further. To encourage these interactions to come to transform into meaningful policy-research engagements, EPoD will maintain a dedicated staff person to support project development for at least one high-potential engagement in the two months following the dialogue.

Primary funding for this event comes from the UK Department for International Development's Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence (BCURE) program, with additional support from the Harvard Kennedy School's Women and Public Policy Program and the International Growth Centre.





## Proposed Agenda

### DAY 1 – EVENING PROGRAM

- Keynote address by Dr. Rohini Pande (open to the public)
- Panel discussion on using data to inform gender-focused policymaking (open to the public)
- Dinner with invited Gender policy Dialogue participants, donors, and researchers

### DAY 2 – FULL DAY PROGRAM

#### MORNING SESSION: PRESENTATIONS

- Smart Policy Design Presentation
- Researcher presentations on women-centered policy research
- Moderated Q&A with researchers: How does SPDI inform their work?

#### AFTERNOON SESSION: PROJECT IDEAS WORKSHOP (MATCHMAKING)

- Participants work through the SPDI model on topics choice related to the key theme, facilitated by researchers
- Dialogue concludes with group presentations of problems & proposed SPDI solutions, discussion

