

Economics Seminar, Indian Statistical Institute, New Delhi.

SPEAKER: Nishith Prakash, Connecticut.

TITLE: **Cycling to School: Increasing Secondary School Enrollment for Girls in India.**

TIME: 11:30 AM - 01:00 PM

DAY & DATE: Friday, 02nd August, 2013

PLACE: Seminar Room 2

Abstract:

We study the impact of an innovative program in the Indian state of Bihar that aimed to reduce the gender gap in secondary school enrollment by providing girls who continued to secondary school with a bicycle that would improve access to school. Using data from a large representative household survey, we employ a triple difference approach (using boys and the neighboring state of Jharkhand as comparison groups) and find that being in a cohort that was exposed to the Cycle program increased girls' age-appropriate enrollment in secondary school by 40% (a five percentage point gain on a base enrollment rate of thirteen percent) and also reduced the gender gap in age-appropriate secondary school enrollment by 40%. Parametric and nonparametric decompositions of the triple-difference estimate as a function of distance to the nearest secondary school show that the increases in girls' secondary school enrollment were significantly greater in villages where the nearest secondary school was further away, suggesting that a key mechanism for program impact was the reduction in the 'distance cost' of school attendance induced by the bicycle. We find that the Cycle program was more cost effective at increasing girls' enrolment than comparable conditional cash transfer programs in South Asia, suggesting that the coordinated provision of bicycles to girls may have generated externalities beyond the cash value of the program, such as improved safety from girls cycling to school in groups and changing social norms regarding female secondary school participation.

JEL Codes: H42, I2, O15

Keywords: Conditional transfers, school access, gender gaps, bicycle, girls' education, female empowerment, India, Bihar, MDG

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