

Economics Seminar, Indian Statistical Institute, New Delhi.

SPEAKER: **Sonia Bhalotra**, University of Bristol

TITLE: **Religion, Political Identity and Public Goods in India**

TIME: 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM.

DAY & DATE: Friday, 20th April, 2012

PLACE: Seminar Room 2

Abstract:

(1) Politician Identity and Religious Conflict in India

This paper investigates the impact of Muslim political representation on religious conflict in India during 1980-2007. We code religion from name and construct updated conflict data from Times of India archives. The analysis is currently conducted at the district level. We instrument the share of Muslims elected to state assemblies from the index district with the share of Muslims who won against non-Muslims in close elections in that district. Preliminary results suggest that raising the share of Muslim politicians in state assemblies results in a sizeable decline in the incidence of Hindu-Muslim riots, consistent with evidence that Muslims are more often the victims of such incidents. A significant but small part of the total effect appears to arise from positive selection of minority leaders. Our results are consistent with parochial politics and with theories that indicate the relevance of political identity for policy outcomes (Besley and Coate, 1997). They also suggests a cause of conflict, and hence a solution for the control of conflict, that has not been previously considered in the conflict literature.

(2) Religion, Political Identity and Public Health Delivery

This paper analyzes whether the religious identity of political leaders in India influences policy-determined variation in health outcomes, both for citizens of their religious group and for the population as a whole. In order to analyze the causal effect of the religious identity of politicians, we take advantage of the fact that some Muslim politicians contested in close elections against non-Muslim politicians. Results show that the presence of Muslim politicians significantly reduces infant and neonatal mortality, consistent with positive selection of Muslim candidates in constituencies in which Muslims have a population minority (Banerjee and Pande 2007). We do not find evidence of religious favoritism: Muslims and non-Muslims benefit equally from the presence of Muslim politicians.

<http://www.isid.ac.in/~pu/seminar.html>