

Title: Dream Building, Group Cooperation and Female Entrepreneurship: Evidence from Self-Help Groups in West Bengal

Speaker: Prof. Sanchari Roy, University of Exeter Business School

Area: Economics

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Abstract:

We examine if the constraints to enterprises led by poor women are (also) psychological (*internal*) rather than purely material (*external*). Using a pilot randomized controlled trial, we test whether a short collective psychological training program called “Dream Building” aimed at poor female entrepreneurs in West Bengal, India can boost their group entrepreneurial outcomes. Three months after the intervention, we find significant and sustained improvement in group cooperation, as measured by contributions to a public good game, as well as self-reported interest among SHG members to run a joint business together. We also find suggestive evidence of greater actual ownership of joint business, though imprecisely estimated. Using a simple theoretical model, we elucidate how psychological empowerment may promote aspirations for group cooperation, resulting in higher levels of actual, or realised, cooperation. Consistent with the predictions of the model, we also show that improved group dynamics, including longer regular SHG meetings and greater interaction among members *outside* of regular meetings, are potential drivers of our observed positive treatment effects.

Speaker Profile:



Sanchari Roy is Associate Professor of Economics at the [Department of Economics, University of Exeter Business School](#). Prior to joining Exeter in September 2023, Sanchari was Reader in Development Economics at King’s College London, where she maintains a [visiting appointment](#). She is also External Research Associate at the [CAGE Research Centre, University of Warwick](#), Affiliate at [King's India Institute](#) and Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. Sanchari received her PhD in Economics from London School of Economics.

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