

# **Linking literacy and mobile phone usage among women: Evidence from a women's adult literacy programme in India**

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## **Abstract**

In this paper we evaluate the impact of a female adult literacy programme (FALP henceforth) on the ownership, access and use of mobile phones among its participants. Using a mixed methods research design, we present both quantitative and qualitative evidence, that going through the programme increases both the quantity and quality of mobile phone use. These results assume significance in light of the fact that, in spite of a long history of adult literacy programmes, 50% of women above the age of 15 in India continue to be illiterate (Census 2011). In fact, in the state of UP, where the programme is located, 56% adult women are illiterate. In the last part of the paper we suggest the external validity of these results by using Financial Inclusions Insights (FII) data from India on mobile phone ownership and access from 2013 - 2016. We show that women are less likely to own and use a phone compared to men. The use and ownership of phones increases with education levels and illiterate women are significantly less likely to own and use a phone compared to literate women. These results are robust to inclusion of various controls and fixed effects. The results of this paper show that purely supply side interventions will not be enough to bridge digital divides in terms of gender and education.

## **Speaker Profile:**

Nishant Chadha is a Research Fellow at India Development Foundation. He was an assistant professor at Shiv Nadar University till May 2016 and is a development economist with interest in the fields of political economy, governance issue and economics of education. His current research is about the impact of urbanization on education, the market for private schools and the role of economic changes in shaping politics. He is also working on a UNU-WIDER sponsored project on between-group inequalities in India. He has published in Oxford Development Studies. Nishant has a PhD and M.A. from University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada and B Tech from IIT Kanpur

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