

**Title: Access to Clean Water & the Role of Information and Transaction Costs: Field Experimental Evidence from India**

**Speaker: Rashmi Barua, Jawaharlal Nehru University**

**Area: Economics**

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**Abstract:**

In a rural region of India where groundwater is heavily contaminated with a hazardous naturally occurring compound, we worked with the state government agencies to implement a cluster RCT to study the reasons behind the lack of demand for water quality. We study the constraints households with young children and pregnant mothers face in accessing clean water: is it the lack of information on water quality or is it a combination of information and the transaction costs associated with applying for water via a government private tap water connection program. Our results indicate that the information campaign alone was sufficient to successfully increase awareness and knowledge of arsenic and its ill effects as well as awareness of alternate water supply schemes implemented by the state government. However, to translate this increased awareness into actual change in behaviour and outcomes related to water safety, the transaction cost treatment was salient. In particular, we find large effects on demand for improved water quality and adoption of water safety practices. Most notably the transaction cost treatment led to an increase in breastfeeding (planned) duration among (pregnant) mothers.

**Speaker Profile:**



Dr. Rashmi Barua teaches at the Centre for International Trade and Development, Jawaharlal Nehru University (New Delhi). Prior to that she has worked at the School of Economics, Singapore Management University and the Economics and Planning Unit of the Indian Statistical Institute, New Delhi. Her research spans across the economics of education and labor markets with specific interest in early childhood human capital investments (health and education), female labor supply and economics of crime. More recently she has worked on financial education among international migrants. Most of her research has been a mix of methodological contributions, including randomized evaluations, and empirical applications that are guided by sound economic theory. A native of India, she received a Ph.D. in economics from Boston University in 2008.

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