

Title: Conservative, liberal, fragmented or all at once? Gender norms, misperceptions and change in rural Bangladesh

Speaker: Prof. Vegard Iversen, University of Greenwich

Area: Economics

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Abstract:

Recent research on misperceptions of gender-related social norms finds that men in Saudi Arabia, with subsequent extensions to countries representing 80 % of the global population, underestimate the support among similar, other men for women's freedom to take up paid work outside the home. *Pluralistic ignorance* or the more general *minority view overweighting* appear ubiquitous, suggesting that gender-regressive practices often rest on fragile foundations and may be easier to change than expected. Using data from a large household panel and experiments in rural Bangladesh, we expand the thematic domains covered and report findings that add nuance and sometimes challenge this nascent literature: we show that women's and men's gender-related views are majority conservative in some domains, majority liberal or fragmented in others and not always in the expected manner. In the rural communities studied, norm misperceptions are common but on first sight appear small: this conceals crucial underlying heterogeneity. While the experiments provide snapshots, the panel data add valuable norm dynamics clues: we find that change may be fast, but is neither consistent nor unidirectional and varies both across space and for women and men: backlashes and progressive shifts occur side by side.

Speaker Profile:



Vegard Iversen has a PhD in development economics from University of Cambridge and is a Professor in Development Economics and the Head of the Livelihoods and Institutions Department at NRI. He is a Senior Research Fellow at the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie) and was a non-resident Senior Research Fellow at UNU-WIDER, Helsinki from 2019 to 2023. His research covers a variety of themes, including social mobility in developing countries. Vegard has extensive field, survey and other data collection experience. His applied research spans the use of modern impact evaluation techniques, mixed methods, behavioural experiments, archival work and the occasional sociological or anthropological detour.

Webpage Link: <https://www.gre.ac.uk/people/rep/faculty-of-engineering-and-science/vegard-iversen>