



Centre
for Public
Policy

XX International Conference on Public Policy & Management

August 19-21, 2025

Conference Proceedings & Abstracts

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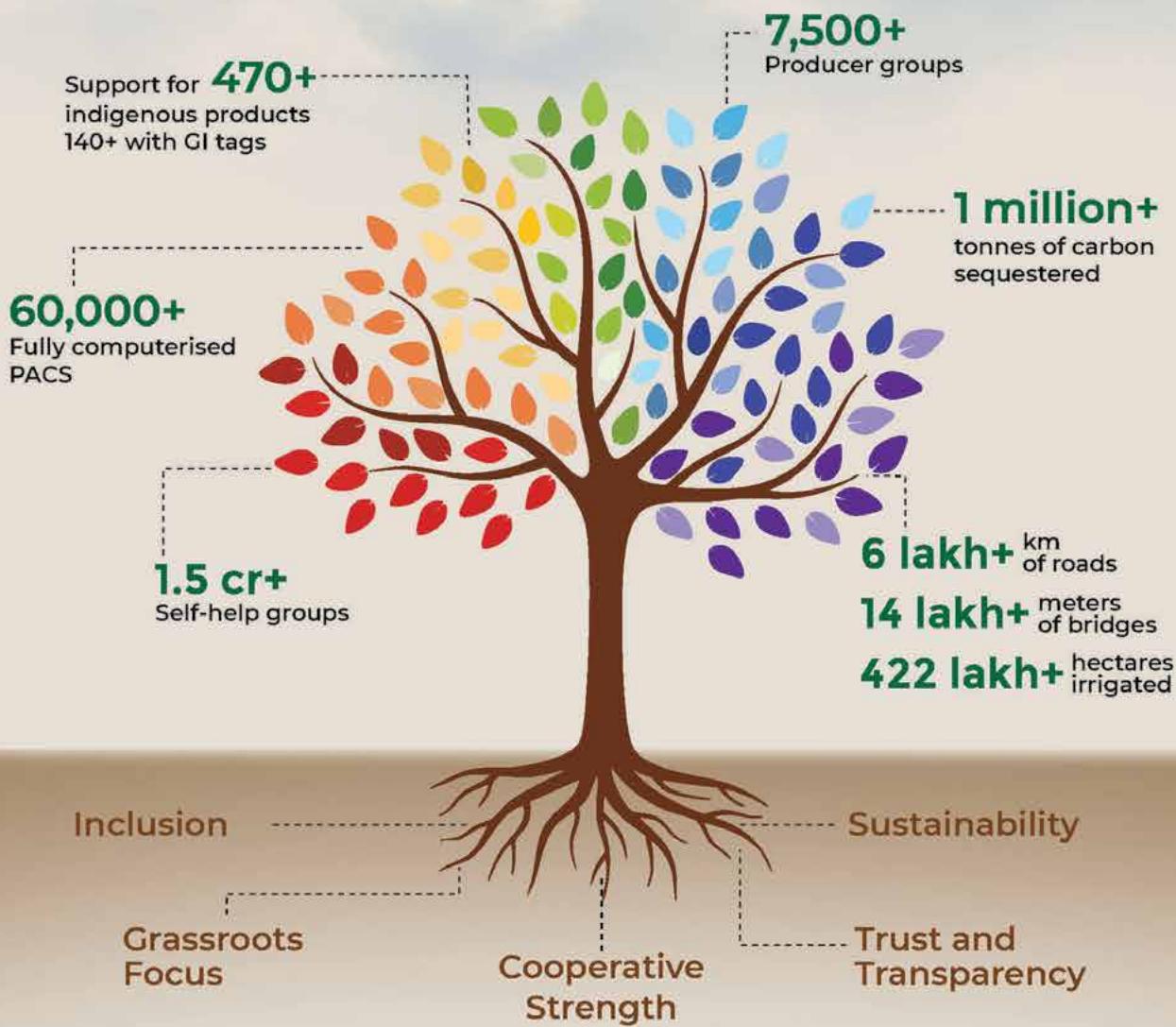
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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our sponsors, Quess Corp Ltd, Axis Bank and NABARD, without whose support the conference would not have been possible. Additionally, we would like to thank the conference committee for their direction, the Centre for Public Policy staff for their support, the research associates, academic associates and research scholars for their unwavering work in organizing the conference. Finally, we would like to thank our presenters and participants for making the conference a resounding success.

Chairperson's Note



Public policy design and implementation, affecting the lives of everyone in the nation-state, represents a constantly evolving process encompassing all aspects of collective living to ensure a sustainable society. It includes diverse issues, a framework of laws, regulations, and actions governments implement to achieve social and economic goals for the public welfare. Various factors can influence it, including political ideology, socio-economic conditions, and societal values. It covers many issues,

such as education, healthcare, social welfare, economic development, and environmental protection, among others.

The annual international conference on public policy and management of the Centre for Public Policy is not just an academic gathering but a crucial platform for all stakeholders from a wide range of domains to engage in in-depth discussions and debates. It is a space where research results are shared, ideas are discussed, and new perspectives are gained. The conference provides a unique opportunity for policy stakeholders to understand how societal, political, and economic dynamics progress over time. It highlights the critical and pressing need for public policies to be flexible and responsive to effectively accommodate and address these evolving changes. The need for discourse on shaping public policy and constant iteration of learning, formulating, implementing, evaluating and re-learning is essential. Participating in this conference can significantly enhance understanding of public policy and management and provide a robust platform to share the work of the academic and practitioner in a global, peer-reviewed, rigorous environment so that policy choices can be better analysed and understood.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the excellent and timely work executed by our colleagues at the CPP and the larger IIMB community managing the conference with all the logistical and administrative challenges. I thank the IT department, the Communications unit, and the rock pillars of the CPP office: Sesikala G, Kavitha L, Ashoka Shankarappa Malaji, along with Supriya Lakhakia, Khushi Shah, Atif Anwar, Ashitha Vijayan, Aparna Nanda, Jarul Zaveri, Kritika, Niranjana A, Dattatreya Mukhopadhyay, Kumar Naveen, Swetcha Poladi, Raj Panchal, Gopinath Annadurai, Shaivi Kulshrestha, Archiesman Basu, Indu Poornima, Anu G Kirthana and Amshrutha Rudresh.

With the support of our team, the larger IIMB community, our sponsors – Quess Corp, Axis Bank & NABARD and the academic and practitioner community, I am confident that the next conference will be a resounding success. I look forward to your active participation and contribution to the same.

Prof Gopal Naik

Chairperson
Centre for Public Policy



Centre for Public Policy

The Centre for Public Policy (CPP) at Indian Institute of Management Bangalore (IIMB) is an independent public interest-oriented policy think tank engaged in pioneering research, teaching, training and capacity-building. The CPP was established in 2000 based on a tripartite agreement between the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), the Government of India (GoI), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and IIMB. The Centre was founded on the twin objectives of effectively influencing policy discourse and improving governance through capacity building. These are achieved through extensive research and stakeholder engagements across multiple domains. The Centre's work in various areas of public policy is continuously being aided through its worldwide association with a number of think tanks. As a think tank, CPP provides advice and evaluates ongoing policies at the national and sub-national levels. Being housed within an academic setting, the Centre brings rigor and builds learning and knowledge from these engagements. The Centre also works closely with NGOs and independent professionals. At present, CPP offers a vibrant platform for critical thinking, ideation, research, debates and dialogues around policymaking and implementation. The Centre is actively engaged in all stages of policy cycle – formulation-implementation-evaluation-reformulation.

The backbone of the Centre, the faculty, belong to diverse disciplines and research interests. Their influential research and publications play a critical role in guiding public policy dialogue and thinking. Their wide network, with many influential policy-related committees within the country and abroad, further supports the enhanced visibility of the Centre's efforts and work in public policy. Faculty members regularly work on a wide and ever-changing set of topics broadly around issues of urban governance, law and development, understanding mechanisms through which social policy impacts health and gender outcomes, challenges in financial inclusion and the broader consequences of inequality. Themes in public management and public service delivery are also central to the work of the Centre.

XX Annual International Conference on Public Policy and Management

The Centre for Public Policy (CPP) hosted the XX Annual International Conference on Public Policy and Management from 19th to 21st August 2025. The theme for this year's conference was '**Rethinking State Capacity in Delivering Public Policy**'. This year's conference was a special event for the Centre for Public Policy since the Centre is celebrating its silver jubilee this year.

The organizing committee of the 2025 CPP Conference on Public Policy & Management comprised Prof. Rajalaxmi Kamath, Chairperson, Internal Committee; Prof. Arnab Mukherji, Chairperson, Post Graduate Programme in Public Policy and Management (PGPPM); Prof. Allen P Ugargol; Prof. Rusha Das and Prof. Arpit Shah – all IIMB faculty from the Public Policy area.

The conference received **200 papers** for consideration from policy academicians and practitioners, out of which **60 were chosen for presentation**. The conference began with the **Pre-conference Workshop** on 18th August 2025. The workshop featured two talks, the first by Prof. Rusha Das titled, '**Critical Policy Research: Uncovering Power, Contestation and Change**', followed by Prof. Maya Ganesh's talk on, '**Quasi-Experimental Methods for Impact Evaluation and Evidence-Based Policy Making**'.

Day One of the conference on 19th August 2025 began with the inaugural address by Prof. Gopal Naik, Chairperson, Senior Fellow and Jal Jeevan Mission Chair Professor at the Centre for Public Policy. Prof. Naik's address was followed by a plenary talk on, 'Technology Driven Capacity Challenges to Public Policy Formulations – a Relook at Education, Identity, Privacy and Democracy' by Dr. Subrata Rakshit, Retired Distinguished Scientist and Director General, Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). Prof. Rajalaxmi Kamath and Prof. Arnab Mukherji too addressed the audience, which was followed by paper presentations and other talks. A panel discussion was held on, 'State Capacity and Informal Labour Markets in Contemporary India', featuring Shashi Kant, G Manjunatha, Lohit Bhatia, Ajit Kumar Babu and Ziaul Hoda, moderated by Dr. Lakshmi Parvathy.

Day Two of the conference opened with a panel discussion on, 'Pathways from Primary Health Care to Universal Health Care'. The panel discussion featured Prof. Arnab Mukherji; Ms Akay Minz, State Programme Coordinator, National Health Mission, Government of Jharkhand; Dr. Kamlesh Kumar, Director cum State Nodal for CP-CPHC, Government of Jharkhand, and Sri D. Randeep, Secretary to Government, Scheduled Tribes Welfare Department, Government of Karnataka. Dr. N. S. Prashanth, Director, Institute of Public Health, Bengaluru, moderated the session. Other talks and more paper presentations comprised the remaining sessions.

This year's conference also featured a mid-conference workshop organized by the Centre for Budget and Policy Studies (CBPS) titled, '**Using participatory methods for community engagement and policy advocacy**'.

Day Three featured key sessions showcasing some of the latest developments in policy research and practice. The plenary talk on, 'Policymaking in a Multilateral World: Some Reflections from

'History and Practice' was led by Vikram Raghavan, international lawyer and development practitioner, and Lead Counsel at the World Bank. The Prof. M R Krishnamurthy Memorial Lecture was delivered by Vishwanath Srikantaiah, water activist and urban planner, on 'Bengaluru and its Long-term Engagement with Water Security'. The panel discussion on, 'Making Operation & Maintenance of the Jal Jeevan Mission Schemes Sustainable' featured Parameswaran Iyer, Executive Director, World Bank; Arun Kumar Kembhavi, Director, Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, GoI; Jafar Shareef Sutar, Deputy Secretary, RDWSD, Government of Karnataka; Manish Wasuja, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Specialist, UNICEF, and Madhavi Purohit, Senior Manager - Programs, Arghyam. The discussion was moderated by Prof. Gopal Naik. The panel discussion on, 'Dharma in Public Administration' featured Shivakumar GV, Director, IKS Change-makers at INDICA; IIMB PhD alumnus Dr. Srinidhi, Faculty at Indica Courses and Independent Researcher, Bengaluru, and Prof. G Ramesh, former faculty of IIMB from the Public Policy area.

Proceedings

Pre-conference Workshop

18th August 2025

Workshop 1: 'Critical Policy Research: Uncovering Power, Contestation and Change', led by Prof. Rusha Das

The qualitative session covered the conflicting implications of policies. "Policy is not a neutral tool, there are visions of development, along with invisibilities", pointed out Prof. Das. Drawing from her research work on environmental policymaking, she explained the utility of studying policy critically. "This kind of study engages more deeply with histories, contestations and power, and helps understand governance structures and policy processes through a comparative, critical and interdisciplinary lens. It is also a pedagogical invitation to think critically about how we study policy, covering the geopolitics of knowledge, the movement between theory and practice, and just and grounded scholarship."

She cited the example of the proposed ports in Honnavar in Karnataka and other locations under private, public or PPP models, and the impact of such policies at a trade/corporate level as against impact on the local population. Stating that progress should not come at the cost of ecological or social displacement, she recommended measures to counter such adverse impact. "There should be theory-practice integration. Let us look beyond architects, planners and policy makers – to informal actors as designers/planners. Local communities should serve as co-creators, breaking down the knowledge producer vs user silos. Reciprocal and relational learning, participatory research projects, and learning and theorizing together will actually address real needs – not just academic curiosity. The aim should be to translate knowledge into accessible forms like policy briefs, community reports in local language, podcasts, etc. Research should be mobilized for change, based on alternative frameworks of community-based preservation."

Workshop 2: 'Quasi-Experimental Methods for Impact Evaluation and Evidence-Based Policy Making', led by Prof. Maya Ganesh

The quantitative session explored how impact evaluation establishes if specific programs, program modalities or design innovation, cause a change in an outcome. "Programs and policies are designed to change outcomes – raising income, improving learning or reducing illness. Impact evaluation is part of the agenda of evidence based policy making. Classic impact evaluation can also list alternative program modalities", explained Prof. Maya Ganesh.

She also discussed the different methods such as counterfactuals, randomization, randomized controlled trials (RCTs), etc. Terming randomization the "gold standard of impact evaluation", she added, "When randomization is not feasible, we rely on natural experiments, or a quasi-experimental design."

Discussing what enables government to bring about a positive change, she cited the example of India's food security program. "Linking Aadhaar with ration cards, paved the way for the government to roll out agent choice. The introduction of agent choice increased uptake by enabling more beneficiaries to collect grains from their own pre-decided agents."

Plenary Talk

'Technology Driven Capacity Challenges to Public Policy Formulations – a Relook at Education, Identity, Privacy and Democracy'

By Dr. Subrata Rakshit, Retired Distinguished Scientist and Director General, DRDO

19th August 2025



Dr. Rakshit's talk placed more emphasis on happiness, expertise, common language and patience over mandated rush, in the arena of policy making. "Individuals pursuing just their own goals will result in the society getting stuck, hence policy intervention is needed", observed Dr. Rakshit, adding that technology-driven advancements bring capacity challenges to public policy formulation, in the realms of education, identity, privacy and democracy. "In terms of education and economy – awareness, understanding for social coherence, skilling for productivity, life skills for happiness are essential. Identity for individuals for day-to-day transactions have to be unique, constant, verifiable, or attestable, or at least authenticated. Individuals have the privacy option, to withhold information. Democracy has to determine the correctness of policy and its execution."

Proceeding to the implications of modern technology on policy, he explained, "Technology is evolving and diversifying without checks on speed or quality; it is becoming harder to understand, at the same time, it has become too useful too. The other issues are related to informed consent, future impact which is not understood or predictable. Prior knowledge is another concern – society needs few generations to build 'priors' or wisdom. There is also the question of population yield – can everyone understand technology, or even want it? Dealing with superior intelligence, human or artificial, can be brutal."

"Data can be copied, edited or embedded, leading to information control, ownership and transfer issues. Growth of digital identities is matched by growth of fears and frauds", he pointed out, adding, "Digital identities in cyberspace was a whole new game. This is where public policy has to come in. Policy making has to balance costs, benefits and accountability. Verifiable (live) biometrics like Aadhaar need to be understood and leveraged correctly."

"Education and healthy economy are linked to a positive population yield. The current design logic is to build the most profitable economy from the commerce or technology perspective, then train the population. The syllabus, distractions and definition of success are all rising. All this will lead to collateral damage to the next generation, so public policy has to come in. The loading has to be tempered. Education should be human population capacity centric and sustainable. The standards can be brought down, students and teachers cannot be made to feel inadequate, the objectives of social coherence and life skills for happiness must be reemphasized and met. Intelligence must be conditioned to be more empathic", Dr. Rakshit recommended.

"Short term benefits outshine long term implications in democracy, in the era of technology and AI. All these make democracy have more noise than signal. Policy needs to control the dynamics of human-AI coevolution. To determine what qualifies as a 'Right', it is not enough to just have a desirable outcome; it should have consistency when applied to all members of the society. Rushing into the policy space without paying any heed to sustainability, cannot be the way forward", he pointed out.

Stating that technology solutions may eliminate labor and service of humans, he said that unemployed humans cannot generate demand. "This calls for policy level interventions beyond normal market dynamics. The history of human civilization has shown that the rich and learned often take control, leaving the weaker sections uncared for, which leads the society towards decline. To address these challenges, we need to compute solutions which are matched with the education system and fertility profiles. To build a multipolar model in which society has mobility and long term stability, we all need to work together."

Panel Discussion: 'State Capacity and Informal Labour Markets in Contemporary India'

Panelists: Shashi Kant, G Manjunatha, Lohit Bhatia, Ajit Kumar Babu, Ziaul Hoda

Moderator: Dr. Lakshmi Parvathy

19th August 2025



India's labour market is rapidly changing, shaped by demographic shifts, technological change and novel employment relations, yet constrained by persistent informality and weak protections. This challenges the state's capacity to govern and calls for an occasional redefinition of its role, institutional designs, continuous monitoring and adaptation to changing times. The panel sought to address how the state, employers and policy adapt to ensure secure, quality jobs amid pursuits for high growth.

The speakers observed that life around us is full of the informal sector - KR market in Bangalore, delivery partners and construction workers. We see two types of informal labour markets, the contract labour market and the employer-employee relationship market. Both of these are moderated by the rise in e-commerce, and the speed at which they are scaling is immense. This resulted in the rise of gig workers as the primary workforce in the country.

The speakers highlighted the lack of social security and benefits given to gig workers despite the massive contribution they make to the economy, calling this an anomaly. They also highlighted the need for moving to a formal labour market in order to strengthen the labour force and called for strong policy changes and strict implementation to do so.

Panel discussion:

'Pathways from Primary Health Care to Universal Health Care'

Panelists: Prof. Arnab Mukherji IIMB; Ms Akay Minz, State Programme Coordinator, National Health Mission, Government of Jharkhand; Dr. Kamlesh Kumar, Director cum State Nodal for CP-CPHC, Government of Jharkhand, and Sri D. Randeep, Secretary to Government, Scheduled Tribes Welfare Department, Government of Karnataka

Moderator: Dr. N.S. Prashanth, Director, Institute of Public Health, Bengaluru

20th August 2025



The panel discussion on *Pathways from Primary Health Care to Universal Health Care* began with an introduction by Prof. Arnab Mukherji who presented research on Primary Health Care (PHC) inputs and Universal Health Care (UHC) outcomes. Sharing research findings, he emphasized the importance of PHC inputs in improving UHC outcomes. The analysis highlighted that PHC inputs explain a substantial portion of the variation in UHC outcomes, underscoring the need for targeted health system interventions and policies tailored to the specific context of each state.

This was followed by a presentation by Sharmada Sivaram, a researcher in Public Health and Consultant to IIM Bangalore, who shared three case studies conducted in Jharkhand and Karnataka as part of their research.

Dr. Kamlesh Kumar spoke about the functioning of Ayushman Bharat-Health and Wellness Centres (AB-HWCs) in diverse environments in Jharkhand with nearly 33 percent tribal population. He discussed their approaches to identifying challenges, mobilizing resources and planning the way forward. **Ms. Akay Minz** shared her experience of promoting community engagement in primary healthcare. She highlighted efforts to attract adolescents, youth and women to partic-

ipate in social issues and healthcare. **Sri D. Randeep** shared his experiences on health system navigation for vulnerable groups through locally trained, in-group facilitators. He explained how this approach contributed to improving preventive healthcare among vulnerable groups and emphasized the importance of a convergent approach between various departments.

Dr. N.S. Prashanth concluded the session by highlighting the value of such discussions that bring practitioners and researchers together, adding that inputs from them, since they are deeply embedded in a complex system, will help create learnings to improve outcomes for the people.

Panel discussion:
'Making Operation & Maintenance of the Jal Jeevan Mission Schemes Sustainable'

Panelists: Parameswaran Iyer, Executive Director, World Bank; Arun Kumar Kembhavi, Director, Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Gol; Jafar Shareef Sutar, Deputy Secretary, RDWSD, Government of Karnataka; Manish Wasuja, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Specialist, UNICEF, and Madhavi Purohit, Senior Manager - Programs, Arghyam

Moderator: Prof. Gopal Naik

21st August 2025



The day opened with a panel discussion on, 'Making Operation & Maintenance of the Jal Jeevan Mission Schemes Sustainable'.

Parameswaran Iyer opened the session by sharing his global experience on sustainable measures relating to drinking water supply in rural areas, focusing on operations and maintenance, challenges and opportunities. "The pathway indicated by the World Bank lists accountability, capacity of institutions, transparency and stakeholder engagement, operational efficiency and resilience. Thinking of sustaining benefits of any program is vital at the time of design, not after."

Prof. Gopal Naik shared some of the learnings from his research on sustainability, operations and maintenance of JJM schemes. "Sustainable management of rural drinking water supply can be achieved through co-ownership between the community and government. A phased approach, including 24/7 supply, determining user charges, monitoring and evaluation are needed for long term success. Clear checks and balances and ownership are critical."

Calling JJM the largest social sector plan in India, **Arun Kumar Kembhavi** recommended dedi-

cated cooperatives or foundations to deal with water management issues and schemes, instead of having unrealistic expectations from communities.

Jafar Shareef Sutar spoke about some of the resistance that comes from the community when new measures or reforms are introduced, and how Karnataka deals with the same. "Karnataka is one of the first states to instal water meters." He also listed factors needing boost to be service delivery, scaling up pilots, 24/7 supply, etc. "After creating infrastructure, hand holding for implementation is also needed. Engineers need to act as social engineers by actually owning the project. With this attitude, all schemes would be sustainable."

Pointing out that JJM has brought about professionalization of services, **Manish Wasuja** recommended more training at the gram panchayat level on management of schemes. "Along with capacity building, a behavioral change – where individuals value water, especially in the face of climate change impacting water – needs to be generated."

Madhavi Purohit shared her organization Arghyam's vision, focusing on service delivery, customer satisfaction, turnaround time, cost analysis, sustainability, tech-enabled measures, getting things right the first time, etc. "We look at institutional, financial and source sustainability. Information, capability and resource gaps need to be looked into. To make impact of JJM sustainable, we need to focus on community engagement."

Panel discussion: **'Dharma in Public Administration'**

Panelists: Shivakumar GV, Director, IKS Changemakers at INDICA; IIMB PhD alumnus Dr. Srinidhi, Faculty at Indica Courses and Independent Researcher, Bengaluru, and Prof. G Ramesh, former faculty of IIMB from the Public Policy area

21st August, 2025



During this panel discussion, **Shivakumar GV** discussed the *Karmayoga* model for Institutional *Dharma*. Using examples from incidents in the 'Mahabharata', he explained how *purushartha* becomes *karmayoga*.

Dr. Srinidhi spoke about the concept of *Dharma* adding that this concept offers a robust theoretical framework for public policy analysis and formulation. "Goals of a *Dharmic* Administration are to balance freedom and compassion through individual welfare and good conduct." He proposed a four-tiered approach for ensuring adherence to laws – prioritizing self-correction over coercion.

Prof. Ramesh's presentation used the case of Isha Foundation and its diverse initiatives such as the 'Conscious Planet' movement, the 'Isha Gramotsavam' event and other community mobilization activities, to explore concepts of wisdom in development, social capital, service and human potential.

Plenary Talk: **'Policymaking in a Multilateral World: Some Reflections from History and Practice'**

By Vikram Raghavan, international lawyer and development practitioner, Lead Counsel at World Bank

21st August 2025



During the plenary talk on, 'Policymaking in a Multilateral World: Some Reflections from History and Practice', Vikram Raghavan focused on state capacity and its reflections from history and practice, which was something that helped him better understand the associated problems of today, he shared.

Drawing from his own experience and research, Vikram Raghavan explained what state capacity meant. "It is a multidimensional concept, without any universal definition. It reflects the state's ability to achieve goals, the government's ability to get things done, organizational as well as bureaucratic ability, with multiple approaches to measurement."

"All these matter because of the development prospects including social and economic outcomes, and social contract, that is, the security and services provided by state for citizen compliance and legitimacy. They also promote accountability and governance effectiveness."

Explaining the World Bank's thinking and approach to state capacity, he said, "The World Bank is a developmental agency, which influences policy changes of many countries." He went on to list various projects of the World Bank, with a detailed account of the evolution and expanding capacity of the projects. "These include the State at Bretton Woods or the Bretton Woods Confer-

ence of 1944; reconstruction to development; concessional and technical assistance; war against poverty; policy reform, governance and corruption; state building, service delivery and crises response, and governance programs and initiatives.”

Talking about the road ahead, he quoted the World Bank’s ‘World Development Report 2024’ which highlights what developing economies can do to avoid the ‘middle-income trap’ and achieve high-income status in the coming decades. “For these countries to shift up, you need state capacity. The 2025 report (forthcoming) looks at standards – voluntary and regulatory – adopting which countries can further their development agenda. It is clear that development runs from state experience and the broader literature, technical competence alone will not help achieve the desired outcome. Trust by citizens makes reforms successful, otherwise the probability of breakdown persists. That is the foundation of sustainable development.”

Former IIM Bangalore Director and faculty of the Public Policy area Prof. G Raghuram felicitated Vikram Raghavan.

Prof. M R Krishnamurthy Memorial Lecture: 'Bengaluru and its Long-term Engagement with Water Security'

By Vishwanath Srikantaiah, water activist and urban planner

21st August 2025



The conference events concluded with the Prof. M R Krishnamurthy Memorial Lecture by Vishwanath Srikantaiah, water activist and urban planner, on 'Bengaluru and its Long-term Engagement with Water Security'.

The Memorial Lecture Series is in honour of Prof. M R Krishnamurthy of Sri Krishnarajendra Silver Jubilee Technological Institute (SKSJTI), an educational institution which was among the first to focus on management of the textile industry. The theme of the lecture series is Bangalore centric, focused on the city and its myriad opportunities, strengths, contributions and issues. In a fitting tribute, Prof. Krishnamurthy's family members were present at IIM Bangalore's lecture. Vishwanath Srikantaiah termed his talk as a personal, intellectual and practical journey to the issue of water and Bangalore. Quoting the phrase 'Geology is destiny', he said this may create challenges at a country and city scale. "The disruption between storage and usage of water, for agriculture, domestic consumption and industrial use, in a growing city like Bangalore, and bringing about a balance between the two, is a big challenge. Is there sufficient water, will it be sufficient in the future, what can be learnt from the past and what can we do in future, are the issues we need to ponder on."

He spoke about the unique geology of the city and the tradition of water management through diverse means. Discussing social hydrology, he said, "Water in itself has no great value. Water is

with what water does – how the benefits of water are delivering justice, equity and access. From a policy perspective, water can actually bring about inequity if not designed to deliver justice. The policy goal is not merely the functional availability of water, but to make access to water available to the weakest in the society. The social injustices that water has cost in the past, need to be rectified and this can be carefully crafted by the institution managing the revival by assessing who the water will reach, who will benefit, if there is scarcity of resource or distributor justice scarcity." He also discussed the dominant impact of the drought and famine in Mysore/Bangalore during 1876-78 on water systems. "But I must mention the historical serendipity as well – why Bangalore has water is because of gold. KGF and its operations led to the Shivasamudra hydro-electric plant and the KRS dam. Hence, gold is at the heart of Bangalore's growth."

"The city has piped water supply, rainwater, treated used water, surface water, soil moisture and groundwater. If we capture the true ecological cost of water, and return it to nature in the same quantity and quality, there will be no pollution. Demand management, pricing and leak reduction need to be focused on. The governance approach to building institutions and capacities to manage water is the key, with life, livelihoods and then commercial use being the hierarchy of needs." Informing the audience that Bangalore city currently supports 40% to 50% of the population of Karnataka in the Kaveri basin, and takes 11% of the state's allocation of water, he added, "Urbanization and metropolitization give an opportunity to solve water problems, instead of creating the same, with the fiscal, governance and technological muscle added with social insights. Monitoring reservoirs, groundwater management, rainwater harvesting, management at the gated community level and rejuvenating lakes, are some of the means. The end goal of revival of urban lakes should include performative, recreational, aesthetic, livelihood, bio diversity, flood control, recharge, etc. If you revive local lakes, local wells, reuse treated waste water and use rainwater wisely, and if you are able to scale it up, then every town will be water secure."

"If aquifer recharge and irrigation are done properly, farmers have water security and livelihood security, the food that they grow will come back to the city completing the circular economy, giving food security to the city, water and livelihood security to farmers plus preserving biodiversity. The future of Bangalore is technologically driven, and that, tempered with a social justice framework, will be the way India will address its metropolitan regions in the future. At a city and national scale, the agenda should be to create institutional and legal frameworks necessary for good governance, climate resilience and less emissions."

He proposed an integrated urban water management system through knowledge, legal and economic means, rather than physical plans alone. "More than a 'water supply' institution, we need a 'systems design thinking' institution. Citizens' role should not just be in partnership, but also in monitoring, holding the state accountable."

Vishwanath Srikantaiah summed up the talk by recommending that to design hydrological systems, a multidimensional lens – social, technical, institutional, financial, legal and environmental – needs to be adopted to support the goal of universal access to water for life and livelihood, from an urban and regional perspective. "The overall goal should be to perceive the city as a water and fertilizer factory in a one health, one water, one community perspective."

Conference Schedule

XX International Conference on Public Policy & Management											
18 th August 2025 (Monday)											
15:00 - 17:30	<p>Public Policy Research Workshop (Pre-conference Event)</p> <p>15:00 - 16:00: Qualitative Session on 'Critical Policy Research: Uncovering Power, Contests, and Change' by Rusha Das, Professor, IIMB</p> <p>16:30 - 17:30: Quantitative Session on 'Quasi-Experimental Methods for Impact Evaluation and Evidence-Based Policy Making' by Maya Ganesh, Professor, IIMB</p> <p>Venue: N-001</p>										
19 th August 2025 (Tuesday)											
8:30 - 9:30	Conference Registration										
9:30 - 10:00	Welcome and Inaugural Address by: Prof. Gopal Naik, Chairperson, Centre for Public Policy Venue: IIMB Auditorium										
10:00 - 11:00	<p>Plenary Talk on 'Technology driven capacity challenges to Public Policy formulations – a relook at Education, Identity, Privacy and Democracy' by Dr. Subrata Rakshit, Retired Distinguished Scientist and Director General, DRDO</p> <p>Venue: IIMB Auditorium</p>										
11:00 - 11:30	TEA BREAK (Photo Session)										
11:30 - 13:00	Session 1	Session 2									
Topic	Climate Policy	Education Policy									
Chair	Prof. Arpit Shah	Muneer Kalliyil									
Venue	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">P-11</td><td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">P-12</td></tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"> Critical polycentric governance: Indigenous People's tenure security in India's forest Dipika Adhikari <i>(The Australian National University)</i> </td><td style="text-align: center;"> Negotiating School Consolidation: Community Responses and Co- Production of Policy in Rural Rajasthan Eeshita Dubey* & Ankur Sarin <i>(IIM Ahmedabad)</i> </td></tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"> Welfare implications of regional coal transitions: A model-based framework Omkar Patange <i>(International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, Austria)</i> </td><td style="text-align: center;"> Parents Assessment of Children's Learning Abilities and School-based Involvement - Evidence from an Experimental Survey of Low Achieving Learners in rural India Rajalaxmi Singh*, Thiagu Ranganathan (<i>CDS, Thiruvananthapuram</i>) & Ricardo Sabates (<i>University of Cambridge, UK</i>) </td></tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"> Firm Sustainable investments and stakeholder pressure: Role of ESG-linked executive compensation Monica Singhania* <i>(University of Delhi) & Ibna Bhan (O.P. Jindal University)</i> </td><td style="text-align: center;"> Incapacity for Innovation: Rethinking State Capacity to address the Liability of Newness Manjunath A N* (<i>Independent Scholar</i>) & Aman Bhuwania (<i>Goa Institute of Management</i>) </td></tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"> Integrating Climate Adaptation into Rural Development Schemes: A Study of MGNREGA in Semi-Arid Karnataka Sunitha B.K.* (<i>JAIN University, Bangalore</i>) & Varsha Agarwal (<i>Atlas SkillTech University, Mumbai</i>) </td><td style="text-align: center;"> Unconditional Cash Transfers for Women's Empowerment: Evidence from Ladli Behna Yojana in Madhya Pradesh, India Krishnendu J* & Biswajit Patra <i>(IISER, Bhopal)</i> </td></tr> </table>	P-11	P-12	Critical polycentric governance: Indigenous People's tenure security in India's forest Dipika Adhikari <i>(The Australian National University)</i>	Negotiating School Consolidation: Community Responses and Co- Production of Policy in Rural Rajasthan Eeshita Dubey* & Ankur Sarin <i>(IIM Ahmedabad)</i>	Welfare implications of regional coal transitions: A model-based framework Omkar Patange <i>(International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, Austria)</i>	Parents Assessment of Children's Learning Abilities and School-based Involvement - Evidence from an Experimental Survey of Low Achieving Learners in rural India Rajalaxmi Singh*, Thiagu Ranganathan (<i>CDS, Thiruvananthapuram</i>) & Ricardo Sabates (<i>University of Cambridge, UK</i>)	Firm Sustainable investments and stakeholder pressure: Role of ESG-linked executive compensation Monica Singhania* <i>(University of Delhi) & Ibna Bhan (O.P. Jindal University)</i>	Incapacity for Innovation: Rethinking State Capacity to address the Liability of Newness Manjunath A N* (<i>Independent Scholar</i>) & Aman Bhuwania (<i>Goa Institute of Management</i>)	Integrating Climate Adaptation into Rural Development Schemes: A Study of MGNREGA in Semi-Arid Karnataka Sunitha B.K.* (<i>JAIN University, Bangalore</i>) & Varsha Agarwal (<i>Atlas SkillTech University, Mumbai</i>)	Unconditional Cash Transfers for Women's Empowerment: Evidence from Ladli Behna Yojana in Madhya Pradesh, India Krishnendu J* & Biswajit Patra <i>(IISER, Bhopal)</i>
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13:00 - 14:00	LUNCH	
14:00 - 15:30	Session 3	Session 4
Topic	Policies on Emerging Technology	Labour Policy
Chair	Prof. Rahul Dé	Prof. Rajalaxmi Kamath
Venue	P-11	P-12
	Framing Caste in Policy: Infrastructure, Power, and the Limits of Technocratic Neutrality Yogini Andhalgavarkulkarni* (<i>BITS Pilani</i>) & Sandeep Hegade (<i>IIT Bombay</i>)	Utilising Network Governance in Decentralised Skilling Initiatives: Impact of Non-Government Actors and the 'Parallel Realities' Mohammad Imran* (<i>IIM Kashipur</i>) & K M Baharul Islam (<i>IMT Hyderabad</i>)
	Caste Bias and Occupational Identity in Large Language Models Jarul Zaveri* & Prof. Arpit Shah (<i>IIM Bangalore</i>)	Dynamics of Employment Vulnerability across India: A State-level Analysis Priya Harchandani* (<i>Bennett University, Noida</i>) & Shamik Shome (<i>Nirma University, Ahmedabad</i>)
	Who is the Lord of the Files? A Comparative Dual-Case Analysis of Policy Capacity for Governing Data Ecosystems in the Global South Tanya Ahuja (<i>IIM Ahmedabad</i>)	The Platform Economy in Transition: Balancing Worker Welfare and Innovation Athreya T Hebbar*, Diganta Kumar Adhya & Sireesha V Reddy (<i>Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune</i>)
	Predictive Analytics for Self-Help Groups: A Data-Driven Approach to Financial Inclusion and Policy Design Divyashree Hegde* (<i>Alliance University, Bengaluru</i>) & M.V. Dinesha (<i>University of Mysore</i>)	Examining the Safety Net Role of Vocational Education and Training in India: Policy Implications for Labour Market Outcomes Abhijit Ghosh* (<i>Mahatma Gandhi College, West Bengal</i>), Neetu Choudhry (<i>Arizona State University</i>) & Anjan Raychoudhury (<i>Durgapur Government College, West Bengal</i>)
	The Digital Edge: Estimating the Effect of Internet on Women-owned Businesses Soumi Bose* & Shreya Biswas (<i>BITS Pilani</i>)	
15:30 - 15:45	TEA BREAK	
15:45 - 17:15	Session 5	Session 6
Topic	Law/Political Economy/State Capacity - 1	Health Policy - 1
Chair	Prof. Anil B Suraj	Prof. Allen Ugargol
Venue	P-11	P-12
	Privacy and Transparency Nexus in Open Government Data: Exploring the complexities arising from overlaps between RTI and DPDP Act. A case of Unified Information Portal in Karnataka, India Rashmi Pavagada Subbamarasimha*, Amit Prakash (<i>IIT-Bangalore</i>) & Bidisha Chaudhuri (<i>University of Amsterdam</i>)	Examining State Capacity in Delivering Universal Primary Healthcare: A Case of Kalaburagi District Gourishankar S Hiremath (<i>IIT-Kharagpur</i>)

	<p>Strategic defections: A game theoretic analysis of party switching before elections Manan Sharma*, Jothsna Rajan & Vinay Ramani (IIT-Kanpur)</p>	<p>Epidemiological burden and trends of neonatal and under-five mortality from lower respiratory infections associated with PM2.5 pollution in India: A systematic analysis of the Global Burden of Disease Study (1990-2021) Chandan Roy (Mizoram University)</p>
	<p>Policy training for Law Makers: The Missing Link in Democratic Governance Mohammad Ali Hussain (Gambella University, Ethiopia)</p>	<p>Blame Avoidance or Satisficing? Evidence for Local Health Department's Distortion of Performance Data Nibras K. Thodika*, Althaf Shajahan & Muhammed Shafi K (NIT-Calicut)</p>
	<p>Political Criminality and Firm-level Risk: Evidence from India Priti Biswas* & Debasish Maitra (IIM Indore)</p>	<p>Safe AI Usage in Telemedicine: A Framework for Ethical, Secure, and Effective Digital Health Solutions Amar Naik* & Biplab Sarkar (PES University, Bangalore)</p>
17:15 – 17:30	TEA BREAK	
17:30 - 19:00	<p>Panel Discussion on 'State Capacity and Informal Labour Markets in Contemporary India' Speakers: Shashi Kant, G Manjunatha, Lohit Bhatia, Ajit Kumar Babu, Ziaul Hoda Moderator: Lakshmi Parvathy Venue: N-001</p>	
19:00	Dinner	
20th August 2025 (Wednesday)		
9:00 - 10:15	<p>Panel Discussion on 'Pathways from Primary Health Care to Universal Health Care' Speakers: Prof. Arnab Mukherji, Sapna Desai, Nirmala Nair, N. S. Prasanth, Government of Jharkhand Representative, Government of Karnataka Representative Venue: N-203</p>	
10:15 - 11:45	Session 7	Session 8
Topic	Methods	Law/Political Economy/State Capacity - 2
Chair	Prof. Maya Ganesh	Prof. Rishikesha T Krishnan
Venue	P-11	P-12
	<p>Effect of Open Access Reform on Electricity Prices and Labour Market: Plant Level Evidence from India Apra Sinha* (University of Delhi), Tarun Mehta (CEEW, New Delhi), Surender Kumar (Delhi School of Economics) & Gopal Sarangi (TERI, New Delhi)</p>	<p>Evaluating the Impact of Administrative Structures and Technological Infrastructure on Public Policy Delivery Rahul Chauhan*, Salim Shamsher (Karnavati University, Gandhinagar) & Harishchandra Singh Rathod (SAL Institute of Management, Ahmedabad)</p>

	Should Governments Measure What They Manage? Experimental Evidence from Monitoring Bureaucrats in India Advitha Arun (<i>University of California, Irvine</i>), Steven Brownstone, Karthik Muralidharan (<i>University of California, San Diego</i>), Siddharth George (<i>NUS, Singapore</i>), Naveen Kumar* (<i>BGS College of Engineering & Technology, Bengaluru</i>)	Evaluating the Impact of Socio-economic Policy Measures on Sustainable Development Goals in BRICS Countries Ajay Massand* & Jayadeva Hiranya (<i>PES University, Bangalore</i>)
	A User-Centered Fast and Frugal Tree for Rapid Block-Level Assessment of Digital Health Implementation: Mixed-Methods Evidence from an Aspirational District in India Anshuman Thakur*, Reshma Bhageerathy, Prasanna Mithra, Varalakshmi Chandra Sekaran (<i>MAHE, Manipal</i>) & Shuba Kumar (<i>Samarth, Chennai</i>)	Public Sentiment and Policy Discourse: A Data-Driven Analysis of Citizen Perspectives on the G20 Summit 2023 Manpreet Kaur (<i>GNA University, Punjab</i>), Rajesh Verma* (<i>Lovely Professional University, Punjab</i>), Frank Kweku Otoo (<i>Koforidua Technical University, Ghana</i>)
	Signing for Safety: Can Mandatory Marriage Registration Reduce Domestic Violence? Rikhya Bhukta*, Sarani Saha (<i>IIT-Kanpur</i>), Debayan Pakrashi (<i>ISI, Kolkata</i>), Ashish K. Sedai (<i>University of Texas at Arlington</i>)	India's New Industrial Policy: Evaluating the Institutional Ecosystem Shaping the Production Linked Incentive Schemes of India Sugandh Aggarwal* & Karthikeya Narayana (<i>IIM Indore</i>)
	From Discord to Accord? Changing Spousal Views on Gender Norms in India Subhapriya Chakraborty* & Atif Anwar (<i>IIM Bangalore</i>)	Public Policy and Political Economy of Hooch Tragedies in Kerala since 1980s: A Case Study of Kollam District Rahul V Kumar (<i>Cochin University of Science and Technology, Kerala</i>)
	11:45 – 12:00 TEA BREAK	
12:00 – 13:30	Practitioner's Track	Practitioner's Track
Topic	Decentralized Governance	Practice & State Capacity
Chair	Anjana Dube	Subodh Kumar Gupta
Venue	P-11	P-12
	The case for a District Convergence Centre: Learnings from Focus Blocks Development Programme Vinothini Jagadeesan*, S. Sivanandham (<i>Government of Tamil Nadu</i>) & S. Srivatsa Srinivas (<i>IIT-Jodhpur</i>)	Strengthening the Capacity of Gram Panchayats in Service Delivery: Convergence with Self-Help Groups Gaurav Nayak (<i>Centre for Research in Schemes and Policies</i>)
	At the Intersection of Information and Opportunity – The Karnataka Skill Connect Portal Initiative of the Government of Karnataka Pavan B* (<i>Karnataka Skill Development Corporation</i>) & Navaneeth Ganesh (<i>IIM Bangalore</i>)	Social Learning in Rethinking State Capacity: Insights from Agroecological Transitions Caroline E Fazli (<i>National Coalition for Natural Farming</i>)

	<p>The state as catalyst – lessons from Meghalaya's agricultural and Institutional Renaissance Dipin V Panicker <i>(IIM Calcutta Innovation Park, Government of Meghalaya)</i></p> <p>Driving Public Entrepreneurship through Decentralized Governance: A Case of Kaushalya Karnataka Reimagined Amrutha Girish (<i>IIM Bangalore</i>) & Rubnawas N* (<i>Karnataka Skill Development Authority</i>)</p>	<p>Schemes Without Systems: Rethinking State Capacity for Agroecological Transitions in Rajasthan and Gujarat C Shambu Prasad (<i>Institute of Rural Management Anand</i>) & Rohith Parakh* (<i>National Coalition for Natural Farming</i>)</p> <p>Making Rural Schools 'Saksham' - A report on the Centre for Public Policy at IIM Bangalore's School Development Initiatives over the years Navaneeth Ganesh*, Amshrutha Rudresh, G Anu Kirthana (<i>IIM Bangalore</i>)</p>
13:30 - 14:15		LUNCH
14:15 - 15:45	Session 9	
Topic	Agriculture Policy/Banking & Finance	
Chair	Prof. Gopal Naik	
Venue	P-11	
	<p>Crop Diversification v/s Risk – Effect of Crop Diversification among Heterogenous Groups in India Firoj Kumar Sahu* & Dinamani Biswal (<i>NIT-Silchar</i>)</p>	<p>Special Track on 'Using participatory methods for community engagement and policy advocacy' by Centre for Budget and Policy Studies (CBPS)</p> <p>Workshop-1: The Development and Utility of Process Indicators (PI) for Social Change, using Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) Venue: N-203</p>
	<p>The Role of Digital Tools in Enhancing Efficiency and Reducing Losses in Post - Harvest Agricultural Supply Chain Prashant Kumar*, Saurabh Agrawal & Ankit Solanki (<i>Delhi Technological University</i>)</p>	
	<p>Informal economies in transition and public debt dynamics Nandu Sasidharan (<i>University of Siena, Italy</i>)</p>	
	<p>Monetary Policy, Debt Composition, and the Limits of State Capacity: Evidence from India's Fragmented Credit Markets Neha Sharma* & Gourishankar S Hiremath (<i>IIT-Kharagpur</i>)</p>	
	<p>Understanding the Uneven Landscape of Financial Inclusion in an Emerging Economy: Evidence from India Sandeep Kumar*, Aparajita Singh (<i>IIT-Roorkee</i>) & Rachita Gulati (<i>Asian Development Bank Institute, Japan</i>)</p>	
15:45 – 16:00		TEA BREAK

16:00 – 19:00	Special Track on ' Using participatory methods for community engagement and policy advocacy ' by Centre for Budget and Policy Studies (CBPS) Workshop–2: Let's build an Anganwadi Activities: What's Your Gender Budget Personality? Roll the Dice: The Gender Budget Adventure Around the World with a Red Briefcase followed by a Panel Discussion Venue: N-203
	DINNER

21 August 2025 (Thursday)		
9:00 - 10:15	<p>Panel Discussion on 'Making Operation & Maintenance of the Jal Jeevan Mission Schemes Sustainable'</p> <p>Speakers: Parameswaran Iyer, Arun Kamal Kishore Soan (tentative), Sameer Shukla (tentative), Manish Wasuja, Madhavi Purohit, Ankita Chakravarthy JJM Team</p> <p>Moderator: Gopal Naik</p> <p>Venue: N-203</p>	<p>Panel Discussion on 'Dharma in Public Administration'</p> <p>Speakers: Shivakumar GV, Srinidhi, G Ramesh</p> <p>Venue: N-201</p>
10:15 – 10:30	TEA BREAK	
10:30 – 12:00	<p>Session 10</p> <p>Topic</p> <p>Health Policy - 2</p>	Session 11
Chair	Arnab Mukherji	G Raghuram
Venue	P-11	P-12
	<p>The Impact of Socioeconomic and Behavioural Factors on Treatment-Seeking Behaviours in Acute Illnesses: Insights from Households in Odisha, India</p> <p>Ranjit Kumar Dehury*, Imteyaz Ahmed (<i>University of Hyderabad</i>), Rajkishore Sahu (<i>IIMR, New Delhi</i>) & Parthasarathi Dehury (<i>Asian Institute of Public Health, Bhubaneswar</i>)</p>	<p>Environmental and Social Safeguards as Legitimation: The analysis of policy discourse for a large dam infrastructure project in Madhya Pradesh, India</p> <p>Budhaditya Das (<i>Dr. B.R. Ambedkar University, Delhi</i>)</p>
	<p>Assessing the Socio-Economic, Public Health, and Gendered Impacts of State-Controlled Alcohol Sales (TASMAC) in Tamil Nadu</p> <p>T. Someswar Reddy, Vishwa Rajkumar & M. Sathyapriya (<i>Sri Krishna Arts & Science College, Coimbatore</i>)</p>	<p>Regional Disparities in India: Evidence of Uneven Development in Karnataka</p> <p>Mohammed Hashim (<i>Krea University</i>)</p>
	<p>Increase in Tobacco Use - Unintended Consequence of Alcohol Prohibition in Bihar</p> <p>Ghanshyam Sharma (<i>RV University, Bangalore</i>)</p>	<p>Shaping Consumer Perception to Foster Electric Vehicle Adoption in India</p> <p>Pranshu Raghuvanshi* & Anjula Gurtoo (<i>IISc, Bangalore</i>)</p>
	<p>Fueling Change: Impact of Mass Media on clean cooking fuel adoption in rural India</p> <p>Cledwyn Fernandez (<i>Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations, New Delhi</i>) & Havishayee Puri* (<i>Delhi School of Economics</i>)</p>	<p>Challenges Faced by Municipal Bodies in India in Adopting Wastewater Initiatives</p> <p>Arun Kumar (<i>NLSIU, Bangalore</i>)</p>
	<p>Costs of Compassion: Impact of informal caregiving on caregivers' wellbeing in India</p> <p>Priyanka* & Sukumar Velakkal (<i>IIT-Kanpur</i>)</p>	<p>Transferable Development Rights Program in Indian Cities - Convenience in the name of neoliberalism</p> <p>Astha Agarwalla (<i>CEPT University, Ahmedabad</i>)</p>
12:00 – 12:15	TEA BREAK	

12:15 - 13:30	<p>Plenary Talk on "Policy Making in a Multilateral World: Some Reflections from History and Practice" by Vikram Raghavan, international lawyer and development practitioner</p> <p>followed by Closing Address</p> <p>Venue: N-203</p>
13:30 - 14:30	LUNCH
14:30 - 15:30	<p>Prof. M R Krishnamurthy Memorial Lecture by Dr. Vishwanath Srikantaiah on his "Experience on Bengaluru and its long-term engagement with Water Security"</p> <p>Venue: M-21</p>

Book of Abstracts

19th August 2025 (Tuesday)

Session 1

Time: 11:30 – 13:00 | **Venue:** P-11

Topic: Climate Policy

Chair: Prof. Arpit Shah

Critical polycentric governance: Indigenous people's tenure security in India's forest*

Dipika Adhikari (*The Australian National University*)

Welfare implications of regional coal transitions: A model-based framework*

Omkar Patange (*International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, Austria*)

Firm sustainable investments and stakeholder pressure: Role of ESG-linked executive compensation*

Monica Singhania (*University of Delhi*) & Ibna Bhan (*O.P. Jindal University*)

Integrating Climate Adaptation into Rural Development Schemes: A Study of MGNREGA in Semi-Arid Karnataka

Sunitha B.K. (*JAIN University, Bangalore*) & Varsha Agarwal (*Atlas SkillTech University, Mumbai*)

Climate change presents escalating risks to semi-arid regions globally, where livelihoods predominantly depend on rain-fed agriculture and vulnerable ecosystems. In India, the semi-arid districts of Ballari, Chitradurga and Vijayapura in Karnataka are particularly susceptible to increased temperature variability, irregular monsoon patterns and recurrent droughts. These factors exacerbate water scarcity, soil degradation and rural poverty. Originally implemented as a rural employment guarantee scheme, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guar-

* Indicates papers under development for which abstracts were not finalized at the time of publication.

antee Act (MGNREGA) has progressively evolved into a critical instrument for climate adaptation in these vulnerable landscapes by facilitating the development of durable natural resource management (NRM) assets that enhance water security and ecosystem resilience. This study adopts a mixed-methods approach encompassing 150 household surveys, focus group discussions, key informant interviews and spatial vulnerability analysis employing a Climate Vulnerability Index (CVI) to evaluate MGNREGA's efficacy as a climate adaptation mechanism in the study districts. Results indicate that approximately 68% of MGNREGA assets prioritize essential water conservation structures – including farm ponds, check dams, and bunds – which have demonstrably improved groundwater recharge, irrigation availability, and agricultural productivity. Notably, women's participation constitutes 61% of the workforce, mainly engaged in afforestation and desilting activities, underscoring the scheme's role in empowering marginalized groups while advancing gender-inclusive climate resilience. Nevertheless, the study highlights significant challenges that impede the full integration of climate adaptation within MGNREGA. These include insufficient technical capacity at the panchayat level, limited incorporation of climate vulnerability data in project design, and fragmented institutional coordination across rural development, agriculture and forestry departments. Further, women's involvement in governance and planning remains limited, constraining inclusive adaptation outcomes.

To bridge these gaps, the study proposes the Climate-Responsive MGNREGA Planning Matrix (CRMPM), an innovative framework that synergizes environmental indicators with participatory rural appraisal tools. This framework aims to systematically embed climate adaptation into MGNREGA's decentralized planning and implementation processes, promoting evidence-based, adaptive asset creation and fostering cross-sector collaboration to build sustainable and resilient rural livelihoods. By elucidating the transformative potential of employment guarantee schemes like MGNREGA in climate adaptation, this research contributes to policy discourse on scaling resilient rural economies under climatic stress. It emphasizes the imperative for institutional capacity strengthening, gender-inclusive governance and integrated multi-sectoral coordination to maximize socio-ecological benefits in India's semi-arid regions.

Session 2

Time: 11:30 – 13:00 | **Venue:** P-12

Topic: Education Policy

Chair: Muneer Kalliyil

Negotiating School Consolidation: Community Responses and Co-Production of Policy in Rural Rajasthan*

Eshita Dubey & Ankur Sarin (*IIM Ahmedabad*)

Parents' Assessment of Children's Learning Abilities and School-based Involvement -Evidence from an Experimental Survey of Low Achieving Learners in Rural India

Rajalaxmi Singh, Thiagu Ranganathan (*CDS, Thiruvananthapuram*) & Ricardo Sabates (*University of Cambridge, UK*)

While India has made significant progress in expanding school enrolment, a major challenge persists in improving children's learning outcomes. This ongoing learning crisis has led policy-makers and development practitioners to call for collective efforts from all stakeholders involved in children's education. Strengthening social accountability has emerged as a key initiative to addressing this crisis, however, its effectiveness depends largely on how well stakeholders understand the actual learning status of children. Although recent studies have explored teacher's perceptions of student abilities, there is limited research on how parents assess their children's reading skills. Additionally, examining who engages in school-parent interactions is crucial to understanding the strength and complexity of the accountability relationship. The study addresses these gaps by investigating parental perceptions of their children's learning and school involvement, particularly among low-achieving students in rural Sitapur district, Uttar Pradesh. The researchers use baseline survey data from the 'Accountability from the Grassroots' project, led by the Research for Equitable Access and Learning (REAL) Centre, University of Cambridge, and Pratham, India.

The findings reveal that a significant proportion of parents tend to overestimate their children's learning abilities, with this overestimation being more prevalent among parents from higher socio-economic backgrounds, who are also more involved with schools. This misalignment or overestimation raises questions about the effectiveness of social accountability - whether these parents, despite being involved, will hold schools and teachers accountable for their children's lack of learning. In contrast, parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds, who accurately understand their children's learning, are often less involved with schools - may be due to structural barriers and power imbalances, which limit their ability to demand for necessary interventions from schools.

Incapacity for Innovation: Rethinking State Capacity to Address the Liability of Newness

Manjunath A N (*Independent Scholar*) & Aman Bhuwania (*Goa Institute of Management*)

This paper rethinks state capacity in the context of innovation governance by examining how states respond to institutional novelty, that is, domains where legal categories, procedural norms, and symbolic frameworks are unsettled. Through a grounded case study of India's regulatory handling of the online gaming sector, the researchers identify six under-theorized dimensions of capacity that become critical in such contexts: four functional capacities, namely, interpretive, enabling, moral-deliberative and adjudicative, and two cross-cutting operational modes, namely, coordinative and anticipatory. These constructs are not alternatives to canonical notions of state capacity (coercive, administrative, extractive, symbolic, transformative), but refinements that explain how high-capacity states may nonetheless falter under conditions of epistemic and normative ambiguity. Methodologically, the researchers employ the Gioia approach to surface constructs inductively from a longitudinal, multi-source dataset comprising judicial records, policy texts, industry submissions, and media reports. The findings reveal that governance breakdowns often stem not from a lack of resources or authority, but from classification failures, fragmented procedural logics, and retroactive enforcement. The researchers theorize these as manifestations of a 'liability of newness' not only for firms, but for the state itself. By bridging state theory with insights from organizational and regulatory scholarship, this paper advances a disaggregated and relational account of state capacity, with implications for the design and diagnosis of public authority in emerging sectors such as AI, fintech, and health tech.

Unconditional Cash Transfers for Women's Empowerment: Evidence from Ladli Behna Yojana in Madhya Pradesh, India

Krishnendu J* & Biswajit Patra (*IISER, Bhopal*)

The Ladli Behna Yojana, an unconditional gender-based cash transfer scheme introduced in India's Madhya Pradesh in 2023, has reached over 30% of the female population in the state. The researchers evaluate its progress one year after roll-out using longitudinal household survey data and triple difference estimators. While average effects are modest, the scheme shows encouraging signs among female-headed and rural households, particularly in health and greater autonomy in women's time allocation outside traditional care roles. However, limited shifts in income, savings and nutritional spending, alongside increased informal borrowing, point to structural constraints that cash alone may not address. These findings underscore the importance of integrating financial inclusion and capacity-building measures to strengthen the program's impact on women's economic agency. While the scheme demonstrates promise, the findings suggest a need for complementary health and financial literacy interventions to realize its potential for women's social and economic empowerment in the state.

Session 3

Time: 14:00 - 15:30 | **Venue:** P-11
Topic: Policies on Emerging Technology
Chair: Rahul De

Framing Caste in Policy: Infrastructure, Power, and the Limits of Technocratic Neutrality*

Yogini Andhalkarkulkarni (*BITS Pilani*) & Sandeep Hegade (*IIT Bombay*)

Caste Bias and Occupational Identity in Large Language Models

Jarul Zaveri & Arpit Shah (*IIM-Bangalore*)

A large body of scholarship has documented evidence of racial and gender biases in large language models (LLMs). In this work, the researchers examine three types of LLM biases in the context of caste and occupational identity in India through five studies. The studies cover a comprehensive set of occupations in India and test for bias across all of India's districts. The results provide four key insights. First, the researchers find representation bias such that individuals from marginalized caste groups are significantly under-represented in LLM output compared to their share in India's working population. This potentially reflects India's digital divide. Second, corrective measures to increase representation introduce other sources of errors. Corrective measures can also lead to association bias where marginalized castes are linked to occupations that require lower education levels and provide lower pay. Third, the models also demonstrate selection bias with a higher probability of shortlisting resumes with names from dominant caste groups. Finally, the researchers propose a training approach by which selection bias can be reduced in LLM shortlisting. The work is highly relevant at a time when generative AI is becoming increasingly important in recruitment and hiring processes as a cost-saving measure.

Who is the Lord of the Files? A Comparative Dual-Case Analysis of Policy Capacity for Governing Data Ecosystems in the Global South

Tanya Ahuja (*IIM-Ahmedabad*)

While data emerges as a strategic currency amidst rapid transformations in innovation and technology, public policy processes become crucial to facilitate its collection, dissemination and utilization. Moreover, in a network of multiple actors and institutions, data concomitantly feeds

into these processes that steer its quality, quantity and availability. In the Global South, India and South Africa have emerged as leading economies in Asia and Africa respectively offering structurally distinct yet comparably active policy ecosystems for empirical analysis. This study anchors around the question, 'How do policy design and capacity in these ecosystems contribute to, and co-evolve with, public policy processes in complex governance environments?' Employing a methodology of comparative dual case study analysis, the paper adopts the conceptual matrix proposed by Wu, Ramesh & Howlett (2015) to assess systemic-level policy competences – analytical, managerial and political – using a two-tiered indicator framework. Tier 1 comprises globally benchmarked indices (e.g., Rule of Law Index, ICT Development Index), while Tier 2 contextualizes these with institutional features such as decentralization patterns, inclusivity architectures, and procedural routines. This dual-layered approach enables tracing design-capacity alignments and mismatches across governance environments. Identifying strengths, asymmetries and critical deficits in design coherence, accountability, and legitimacy, the paper calls for an epistemological shift to address the 'Policy Pandora's Box of Wicked Problems' and theorizes the 'CAPABLE Framework' as a heuristic for diagnosing design-context incongruities. The findings advocate for 'multidisciplinary, contextual and problem-oriented' approaches to governing data ecosystems, recognizing the context-distinctiveness and institutional embeddedness of data governance. It underscores the imperative to ask: 'who' writes socio-politico-economic reality, 'when, where, how, why and so what?'

Predictive Analytics for Self-Help Groups: A Data-Driven Approach to Financial Inclusion and Policy Design*

Divyashree Hegde (*Alliance University, Bengaluru*) & M.V. Dinesha (*University of Mysore*)

The Digital Edge: Estimating the Effect of Internet on Women-owned Businesses

Soumi Bose (*BITS Pilani*)

This study examines the effect of the internet on the outcomes of women-owned small businesses in India, utilizing the Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises surveys. Using the instrumental variable strategy, the researchers find that female-owned businesses using the internet are more likely to have more output, higher productivity and hire workers. On exploring the pathways, it appears that internet eases demand constraints by either improving market or by providing vital information to customers. Use of internet also increases the likelihood of formalization, as such businesses are more likely to maintain audited accounts. The researchers also show that use of internet for payments improves outcomes hinting towards internet reducing the transaction costs. These results underscore the need for targeted policies to encourage women entrepreneurs to adopt digital technology for better entrepreneurial outcomes.

Session 4

Time: 14:00 - 15:30 | **Venue:** P-12

Topic: Labour Policy

Chair: Prof. Rajalaxmi Kamath

Utilising Network Governance in Decentralised Skilling Initiatives: Impact of Non-Government Actors and the 'Parallel Realities'*

Mohammad Imran (*IIM Kashipur*) & K M Baharul Islam (*IMT Hyderabad*)

Dynamics of Employment Vulnerability across India: A State-level Analysis*

Priya Harchandani (*Bennett University, Noida*) & Shamik Shome (*Nirma University, Ahmedabad*)

The Platform Economy in Transition: Balancing Worker Welfare and Innovation

Athreya T Hebbar, Diganta Kumar Adhya & Sireesha V Reddy (*Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune*)

The platform economy has rapidly transformed the landscape of work across the globe, enabled by technological advances such as affordable smartphones, widespread internet access, and digital apps that connect workers to consumers in real time. Platforms like Uber, Zomato, and Urban Company have created vast digital marketplaces where millions of individuals engage in flexible, on-demand work. As of 2023, over 52 million workers worldwide are part of this economy, with projections estimating that the sector could reach a market size of \$1,847 billion by 2032. This new form of labor offers the promise of autonomy and access to income opportunities for many, particularly in emerging economies. Yet, it also raises critical questions about worker welfare, social security, and the responsibilities of companies and governments in regulating this rapidly evolving sector. Platform Companies predominantly classify workers as 'independent contractors' avoiding traditional employer-employee obligations. Although this enables flexibility, it shifts most risks and costs onto workers themselves. This necessitates government intervention. The situation in India exemplifies these dynamics while highlighting unique challenges and policy responses. India's gig economy is expanding swiftly, with estimates of 7.7 million gig workers in 2020-21 expected to grow to 23.5 million by 2029-30. The country's workforce is diverse, with a mix of low, medium, and high-skilled jobs, but regulatory protections have lagged behind this growth. This paper makes a comparative analysis of regulatory responses in Spain, California, and India, highlighting their diverse approaches to worker classification, social security, and

platform accountability. To provide empirical insight, a survey of thirty platform workers from Uber, Zomato, and Urban Company in Pune, Maharashtra, revealed a mixed reality. Workers face inconsistent and often low earnings, compounded by rising platform commissions and strict rules that can lead to job loss. They struggle to access formal credit and lack adequate job security, especially in roles sensitive to age. The consumer-focused dispute resolution process often overlooks worker concerns, leaving them vulnerable to unfair treatment and harassment. In response to these challenges, the study advocates for a 'partial formalization' model in India, as hinted in the Code on Social Security, 2020, which recognizes gig and platform workers as a distinct category to extend social security benefits while balancing flexibility and regulation. Partial formalization benefits workers through enhanced social security and improved work-life balance, platforms through increased engagement and productivity, and states through better tax compliance and data generation. This collaborative model ensures all stakeholders, workers, platforms, and governments thrive together in a regulated yet innovation-driven gig economy. The study also recommends strengthening state capacity through digital infrastructure and targeted awareness programs to ensure that platform workers can effectively utilize available social security provisions. It highlights the importance of collective stakeholder engagement including workers, platforms, and policymakers, to iteratively refine regulations in response to evolving realities. The proposed remedies emphasize the need for robust state capacity and political will to achieve India's *Viksit Bharat* vision.

Examining the Safety Net Role of Vocational Education and Training in India: Policy Implications for Labour Market Outcomes

Abhijit Ghosh (*Mahatma Gandhi College, West Bengal*), Neetu Choudhry (*Arizona State University*) & Anjan Raychoudhury (*Durgapur Government College, West Bengal*)

This paper examines the public policy relevance of vocational education and training (VET) in shaping employment outcomes and wage returns in India, using unit-level data from the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), 2023-24. The analysis revisits the safety net hypothesis, which suggests that VET enhances employability at the cost of lower wages. Disaggregating the population aged 25-60 into five cohorts based on formal education levels, the researchers estimate Mincerian earnings equations alongside probit models of employment, addressing selection bias through the Heckman two-step procedure. The findings challenge the conventional safety net theory. Formal VET significantly improves both employment probabilities and wage outcomes, completed higher secondary or tertiary education. Informal VET, however, yields inconsistent outcomes, often reducing wages for those with higher education. religion, gender, and family background significantly influence labour market outcomes, with disparities persisting across educational levels. Urban areas and higher household economic status correlate with better employment and wage outcomes. The study highlights a critical policy gap: the mismatch between VET training and job types increases with formal education, undermining employability. Conversely, informal VET provides limited employment gains and often results in lower earnings, particularly for better-educated individuals. There are few suggestions. First, expanding access to formal VET. Second, integrating VET programs with general education. Third, stronger linkages between VET institutions and labour market demand, especially in rural and low-income regions in reducing job-skill mismatches requires.

Session 5

Time: 15:45 - 17:15 | **Venue:** P-11

Topic: Law/Political Economy/State Capacity – 1

Chair: Prof. Anil B Suraj

Privacy and Transparency Nexus in Open Government Data: Exploring the complexities arising from overlaps between RTI and DPDP Act; A case of Unified Information Portal in Karnataka, India

Rashmi Pavagada Subbamarasimha, Amit Prakash (*IIT-Bangalore*) & Bidisha Chaudhuri (*University of Amsterdam*)

In the evolving landscape of open government data, the interplay between privacy and transparency has become increasingly complex, particularly in the context of India. Data management and governance within a democratic society is a multifaceted and interconnected system, where various elements interact to ensure the seamless flow of information. This paper applies systems thinking in a practice framework to explore the intricate relationship between privacy and transparency, focusing on the intersections of the Right to Information (RTI) Act of 2005 and the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act of 2023, illustrated by an empirical case of a Unified Information Portal project in India. Both acts play pivotal roles in the broader framework of open government data, with RTI promoting transparency by granting access to public information and DPDP ensuring the privacy and protection of personal data. This paper identifies a few challenges and complexities arising from the overlaps between the RTI and DPDP Acts, which might require clarification to prevent potential confusion and conflicts during implementation. The paper proposes a few policy recommendations and potential amendments that might provide clarifications. It further emphasizes the need for nuanced solutions and a systemic understanding of their coexistence.

Strategic defections: A game theoretic analysis of party switching before elections

Manan Sharma, Jothsna Rajan & Vinay Ramani (*IIT-Kanpur*)

India's electoral landscape is often marred by anti-incumbency, caused in part by the centralized authority that political parties exert over candidate nomination, campaign financing, and electoral strategy. Ambitious incumbents who are denied renomination are frequently allured into switching allegiances, often leading to political instability and having the potential to alter electoral outcomes. Such defections tend to cluster around elections due to the Indian anti-defection law, which prohibits mid-term party switching and incentivizes timing the defections near candidate announcements by the parties. While existing research on party switching often focuses on candidate motivations as the primary antecedent of defection, the researchers argue that a party's denial of renomination also serves as a trigger in the defection process. The researchers

design a generalizable game-theoretic model that captures party switching as the consequence of sequential strategic interactions between parties and candidates. The payoffs for both players are formulated by incorporating the benefits derived from achieving their respective goals and the costs shared for contesting elections. The model reformulates replacement decisions as strategic triggers of defection, rather than viewing switching solely as candidate-driven. A core theoretical contribution is the inclusion of heterogeneous, candidate-specific satisfaction thresholds – capturing office-related and developmental incentives – which explain why some incumbents defect while others stay. The model, though broadly applicable, uses India's centralized and exclusionary selection system to show how anti-incumbency drives strategic defections and induces electoral competition.

Policy training for Law Makers: The Missing Link in Democratic Governance*

Mohammad Ali Hussain (*Gambella University, Ethiopia*)

Political Criminality and Firm-level Risk: Evidence from India

Priti Biswas & Debasish Maitra (*IIM-Indore*)

The researchers investigate the relationship between political criminality and firm default risk. Using a regression discontinuity design on four national elections in India between 2004 and 2019, they establish causal evidence linking the election of criminally-accused politicians to higher firm default risk. The relationship persists through multiple specifications, inclusion of covariates, and alternate measures of firm risk. In elections between an accused and a non-accused politician, the researchers find that firms headquartered in districts where a criminally-accused politician wins an election hold lower cash but have no significant change in debt holdings, as compared to firms in districts where a non-accused politician wins. Interestingly, they fail to observe any causal effect on default risk in the case of state assembly elections. Further exploration using election-announcement period abnormal returns indicates the absence of significant market reaction in case of state assembly elections. Overall, this study presents a novel perspective on the impact of political criminality on firm-level outcomes.

Session 6

Time: 15:45 - 17:15 | **Venue:** P-12

Topic: Health Policy – 1

Chair: Prof. Allen P Ugargol

Examining State Capacity in Delivering Universal Primary Healthcare: A Case of Kalaburagi District

Gourishankar S Hiremath (*IIT-Kharagpur*)

This paper examines the evolving nature of state capacity in delivering universal primary healthcare through the lens of the Ayushman Bharat – Health and Wellness Centre (AB-HWC) programme in India. Anchored in the 2017 National Health Policy, the AB-HWC initiative represents a transformative approach to primary healthcare, emphasizing decentralization, community participation, and digital integration. While the scheme aims to expand access to preventive, promotive, curative, and rehabilitative care, its implementation across India's diverse federal landscape poses complex governance and administrative challenges. Using a detailed case study of Kalaburagi district in Karnataka, a region historically marked by developmental deficits but now showing improvements in health indicators, this study investigates the institutional, infrastructural, and fiscal dimensions of state capacity. It critically analyzes how district administrations, frontline workers, panchayats, and local health institutions co-produce public services under the AB-HWC framework. The findings indicate the importance of localized innovations, intergovernmental coordination, and adaptive learning mechanisms in enhancing last-mile service delivery. Through a combination of field-based observations, policy document analysis and stakeholder interviews, the paper reveals both enablers and bottlenecks in the operationalization of universal primary healthcare. In doing so, it contributes to the broader discourse on rethinking state capacity not as a static attribute, but as a dynamic and context-dependent capability shaped by institutional design, resource flows and community engagement. The Kalaburagi experience provides key insights into how federal and subnational actors can align efforts to achieve inclusive and resilient public health systems.

Epidemiological burden and trends of neonatal and under-five mortality from lower respiratory infections associated with PM2.5 pollution in India: A systematic analysis of the Global Burden of Disease Study (1990-2021)

Chandan Roy (*Mizoram University*)

Background: Lower respiratory infections (LRIs) caused by PM2.5 pollution are a major factor in neonatal and under-five mortality across India. Therefore, this study explores the linkage between PM2.5 pollution on neonatal and under-five mortality from LRIs.

Materials and Methods: This study utilized ambient PM2.5 geographic mean estimates from Washington University and a household air pollution dataset from the fifth round of the National Family Health Survey. Furthermore, child mortality data were extracted from the Global Burden of Disease 2021 to assess the impact of PM2.5 on child mortality attributable from LRIs in India. The study employed 'Getis-Ord-Gi*' statistics in ArcMap 10.4 to identify PM2.5 hotspots and cold spots. Temporal trends for neonatal and under-five mortality were analyzed using joinpoint regression analysis.

Results: From 1990 to 2021, the neonatal mortality rate (NMR) per 100,000 live births declined significantly by 66%, from 6,989.96 in 1990 to 2,377.36 in 2021. Similarly, the under-five mortality rate (U5MR) per 100,000 live births declined by 74%, from 358.52 to 94.15 per 100,000 live births. Additionally, from 2019 to 2021, a notable decline in mortality was observed for both sexes (NMR: -11.56%; U5MR: -16.21%). However, states such as Rajasthan, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar had notably experienced elevated PM2.5 concentrations.

Conclusion: The study revealed that elevated PM2.5 concentrations are likely linked to contributing factors for higher child mortality, particularly in the IGP region. To address this issue, the study suggests increasing public awareness and implementing targeted policies to reduce neonatal and under-five mortality across India.

Blame Avoidance or Satisficing? Evidence for Local Health Department's Distortion of Performance Data

Nibras K. Thodika, Althaf Shajahan & Muhammed Shafi K (NIT-Calicut)

Data manipulation and misreporting contribute to suboptimal data quality in Health Management Information Systems (HMIS). Conceptual frameworks and theories are required to explain these practices and design corrective interventions. To this end, the current study explored specific forms of data distortions and its motivations using reported performance data from India's HMIS. The analysis comprises a data-driven statistical heuristic and inferential statistic that identifies and confirms inconsistent data patterns. The analyses revealed significant data distortion through heaping, characterized by over-reporting of performance figures at maximum points and rounding to common fractions (e.g., halves, quarters, and two-thirds). The researchers interpret heaping at maximum points, as a collective data distortion strategy particularly focusing on process indicators, as a form of blame avoidance. The heaping on common fractions and round numbers that the study identified reflects satisficing, the cognitive tendency to provide 'good enough' responses under low motivation.

Conceptualizing these behaviors as part of perverse and passive forms of performance information use, which provides a larger conceptual framework that guides our analysis, the researchers discuss the implications of their findings for policymakers in designing effective health information systems and for health researchers in utilizing routine health data.

Safe AI Usage in Telemedicine: A Framework for Ethical, Secure, and Effective Digital Health Solutions

Amar Naik & Biplab Sarkar (PES University, Bangalore)

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into telemedicine and digital health platforms holds significant promise for public health enhancement, yet it faces persistent challenges related to safety, explainability, data governance, and regulatory compliance. This study introduces and validates a novel safety-centric AI framework through a rigorous mixed-methods approach, combining statistical analysis of real-world datasets with qualitative case studies from leading tele-health platforms.

Utilizing secondary data from the National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5), the researchers first developed a composite Digital Readiness Index for Indian states via Principal Component Analysis (PCA). They then employed correlation matrices, linear regression, and advanced Random Forest regression with SHAP (SHapley Additive exPlanations) analysis to quantify and interpret the associations between digital readiness and crucial health outcomes, including mortality and vaccination coverage. These quantitative insights are corroborated by case studies of eSanjeevani, Babylon Health, and Aarogya Setu, which illustrate practical considerations for human-in-the-loop (HITL) mechanisms, data transparency, and risk-aware system design.

The findings underscore the imperative for ethical design, continuous validation and robust human oversight in the deployment of AI in telemedicine. This paper concludes by proposing a comprehensive framework and actionable policy recommendations aimed at fostering trustworthy, safe, and scalable digital health ecosystems.

20 August 2025 (Wednesday)

Session 7

Time: 10:15 - 11:45 | **Venue:** P-11

Topic: Methods

Chair: Prof. Maya Ganesh

Effect of Open Access Reform on Electricity Prices and Labour Market: Plant Level Evidence from India*

Apra Sinha (*University of Delhi*), Tarun Mehta (*CEEW, New Delhi*), Surender Kumar (*Delhi School of Economics*) & Gopal Sarangi (*TERI, New Delhi*)

Should Governments Measure What They Manage? Experimental Evidence from Monitoring Bureaucrats in India*

Advitha Arun (*University of California, Irvine*), Steven Brownstone, Karthik Muralidharan (*University of California, San Diego*), Siddharth George (*NUS, Singapore*), Naveen Kumar (*BGS College of Engineering & Technology, Bengaluru*)

A User-Centered Fast and Frugal Tree for Rapid Block-Level Assessment of Digital Health Implementation: Mixed-Methods Evidence from an Aspirational District in India

Anshuman Thakur, Reshma Bhageerathy, Prasanna Mithra, Varalakshmi Chandra Sekaran (*MAHE, Manipal*) & Shuba Kumar (*Samarth, Chennai*)

Background/Objectives: Achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and Sustainable Development Goal 3 in low-resource settings relies on integrating digital health systems. In India, digital health tools have expanded rapidly, yet block-level supervisors and community health workers (CHWs) continue to face 'last-mile' implementation barriers. This study aimed to develop and expertly validate a user-centric Fast and Frugal Tree (FFT) decision-support tool enabling block-level public health supervisors to identify and resolve operational bottlenecks in digital health delivery.

Methods: A mixed-methods study in an aspirational district with a low Human Development Index. Muzaffarpur, Bihar, included a baseline survey ($n = 95$ CHWs), 32 in-depth interviews, and six focus group discussions. Thematic analysis identified key operational and behavioral challenges. A 10-step FFT tool was designed and validated through a two-round modified Delphi

process with 14 experts.

Results: Fieldwork revealed critical deficits in device functionality, connectivity, digital literacy and grievance redressal systems. The FFT tool maps these bottlenecks to clear, actionable steps. The Delphi consensus exceeded 90% for clarity, relevance and completeness. The final tool achieved an overall mean Content Validity Index (CVI) of 0.90, with item-level CVI (I-CVI) scores ranging from 0.79 to 1.00 across domains such as clarity, relevance, completeness, practicality, and scalability, indicating strong and consistent expert agreement. Iterative refinement ensured contextual adaptability and field readiness. **Conclusion:** The validated FFT tool bridges research and practice by offering a scalable, pragmatic protocol for digital health supervision. Its adoption could improve troubleshooting, data quality, and health system performance in similar low-resource settings.

Signing for Safety: Can Mandatory Marriage Registration Reduce Domestic Violence?

Rikhia Bhukta, Sarani Saha (*IIT-Kanpur*), Debayan Pakrashi (*ISI, Kolkata*), Ashish K. Sedai (*University of Texas at Arlington*)

This paper identifies a novel determinant of domestic violence, the lack of legal documentation of marriage in the context of India. For identification, the researchers use a difference-in-differences model, leveraging a mandatory marriage registration law implemented in the Indian state of Bihar. They identify the role of document verification and legal access as potential mechanisms and establish that reductions in polygamy, spousal alcohol consumption, child marriage, and increases in women's education and awareness plausibly drive the reduction in domestic violence. Further analysis reveals that the tangible impacts of the policy only emerge after the implementation of anti-corruption measures in public service delivery, underscoring the critical role institutional efficiency plays in determining policy effectiveness. Thus, mandatory marriage registration is crucial in combating domestic violence, but it must be integrated into broader initiatives to reduce corruption and increase the efficiency of public service delivery.

From Discord to Accord? Changing Spousal Views on Gender Norms in India

Subhapriya Chakraborty & Atif Anwar (*IIM-Bangalore*)

This study examines the degree and nature of spousal agreement and disagreement on gender attitudes towards domestic violence, sexual agency and household decision-making control in Indian homes. Employing nationally representative couple-level data from three rounds of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3, NFHS-4 and NFHS-5), the researchers measure agreement and disagreement in gender attitudes using Yule's Q statistic and examine how these trends change over time. The researchers additionally differentiate between progressive and regressive agreement and analyze their socio-economic and demographic correlates through regression analyses. The results indicate that although overall spousal agreement has increased, the nature of such agreement has changed significantly toward progressive norms, especially in terms of

household decision-making and attitudes toward violence. Yet, tension is still high surrounding women's sexual autonomy, with progressive consensus on this norm dipping temporarily before recovering slightly. Regression findings indicate that rural residence, lesser wealth, caste deprivation and intergenerational IPV exposure are always linked to reduced levels of progressive consensus. This paper adds new evidence by presenting intra-household, over-time empirical examination of evolving gender norms in India and gives critical significance to understanding household dynamics as determinants of gender equity pathways.

Session 8

Time: 10:15 - 11:45 | **Venue:** P-12
Topic: Law/Political Economy/State Capacity - 2
Chair: Prof. Rishikesha T Krishnan

Evaluating the Impact of Administrative Structures and Technological Infrastructure on Public Policy Delivery

Rahul Chauhan, Salim Shamsher (*Karnavati University, Gandhinagar*) & Harishchandra Singh Rathod (*SAL Institute of Management, Ahmedabad*)

This study investigates the impact of administrative, fiscal, technological and political factors on public service delivery performance across ten leading Indian states over a decade (2014–2024). Drawing data from official state government portals, district-level statistics, and governance reports, the research constructs a panel dataset capturing variables such as administrative staff ratio, decentralization index, fiscal capacity, technological infrastructure, political alignment, monitoring mechanisms, election cycles, and delivery performance scores. Using R Studio and a range of econometric techniques – including fixed effects models, panel regression, and diagnostic tests – the analysis reveals that decentralization, technological readiness, and political continuity significantly influence delivery outcomes, particularly in sectors like education, healthcare and local governance. The study underscores the role of real-time monitoring, institutional capacity and digital governance in shaping state-level public service efficiency. It offers valuable insights for policy makers, administrative planners and governance reform advocates aiming to enhance last-mile delivery through data-driven and context-specific strategies. The research also identifies future opportunities in integrating AI-based predictive tools and digital twin technologies for administrative simulations. The findings contribute to global conversations on sustainable governance and responsive public systems in rapidly developing federal democracies like India.

Evaluating the Impact of Socio-economic Policy Measures on Sustainable Development Goals in BRICS Countries

Ajay Massand & Jayadeva Hiranya (*PES University, Bangalore*)

The aim of the research paper is to connect between socio-economic policies of BRICS countries with achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The researchers measure these countries' policy action by GDP growth, attracting more FDI inflows and controlling inflation in their countries. SDG index score is considered as dependent variable. The researchers also construct an SDG Human Development Index by aligning SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) which have played a vital role in shaping HDI trajectories since 2000. They construct panel data by forming country-wise cross section data and yearly time-series data from 2000 to 2023. Having 120 observations, they run the fixed effect and random effect models for panel data analysis. They find that different so-

ocio-economic policies of BRICS countries have contributed in enhancing SDG scores but in different periods. Further, the researchers discuss and compare different policies of BRICS countries related to SDG goals.

Public Sentiment and Policy Discourse: A Data-Driven Analysis of Citizen Perspectives on the G20 Summit 2023*

Manpreet Kaur (*GNA University, Punjab*), Rajesh Verma (*Lovely Professional University, Punjab*), Frank Kweku Otoo (*Koforidua Technical University, Ghana*)

India's New Industrial Policy: Evaluating the Institutional Ecosystem Shaping the Production Linked Incentive Schemes of India

Sugandh Aggarwal & Karthikeya Naraparaju (*IIM-Indore*)

After nearly three decades of policy shift towards greater liberalization of the hitherto statist policies in the country's industrial sector, Industrial Policy (IP) has gained renewed attention in recent years in India. Among the various initiatives exemplifying this emphasis, the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes, spread across fourteen priority sectors and entailing a payout of about US\$24 billion, stand out. This paper examines PLI's design and governance in the light of scholarly literature on effective industrial policies, particularly Khan's (2013) 'Political Settlements' and Rodrik's (2014) 'Embeddedness-Discipline-Accountability (EDA)' frameworks. The researchers argue that PLI's fundamental departure from the earlier versions of India's IP is in the widespread use of the ex-post nature of rent allocation to beneficiary firms, easing, to some extent, the monitoring requirements of the scheme's governance agencies. Early evidence suggests an uneven uptake of PLI across the sectors. As the distribution of power among the organizations affected by the scheme is unlikely to vary across the targeted sectors, the researchers evaluate the PLI's differential performance using other relevant aspects of its rent allocation and management mechanisms. The research contribute to the literature on the importance of considering institutional contexts in evaluating the design and implementation of industrial policies in developing countries.

Public Policy and Political Economy of Hooch Tragedies in Kerala since 1980s: A Case Study of Kollam District

Rahul V Kumar (*Cochin University of Science and Technology, Kerala*)

This paper has attempted to trace hooch tragedies in Kerala since the 1980s through debates and discussions that occurred in the legislative assembly of the state. From the first case reported to the last major incident at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the district of Kollam seems to have been a focal point. The researchers have attempted to understand why Kollam bore the brunt by tracing possible reasons for the first tragedy at Pathanapuram. It is revealed that policies, fragile political environment and specific socio economic conditions might have created conditions triggering the first tragedy. The researchers take cue from these events to highlight how policies with even an element of discretion could trigger consequences that could be quite unpredictable.

Practitioner's Track

Time: 12:00 – 13:30 | **Venue:** P-11
Topic: Decentralized Governance
Chair: Anjana Dube

The case for a District Convergence Centre: Learnings from Focus Blocks Development Programme

Vinothini Jagdeesan, S. Shivanandham (*Government of Tamil Nadu*) & S. Srivatsa Srinivas (*IIT-Jodhpur*)

To promote balanced and equitable development across the country, several targeted programmes such as the Aspirational Districts Programme, the Aspirational Blocks Programme and the Focus Blocks Development Programme are introduced in India. However, challenges arise during the implementation phase at the district or the block level owing to the lack of convergence between various departments responsible for policy implementation. This paper uses a case study-based analysis from the Erode district of Tamil Nadu to present the challenges faced at the district level for targeted schemes related to health, women's welfare, and skill development and entrepreneurship. The inferences from the case studies, particularly on the plausible benefits from the convergence of various departments, motivate the need to come up with a think tank responsible for convergence at the district level, namely the District Convergence Centre. The proposed centre, along the lines of NITI Aayog at the national level and the State Planning Commission at the state level, aims to coordinate the involved departments in ensuring the effective implementation of the welfare policies using insights derived from district-level data analytics.

At the Intersection of Information and Opportunity – The Karnataka Skill Connect Portal Initiative of the Government of Karnataka

Pavan B (*Karnataka Skill Development Corporation*) & Navaneeth Ganesh (*IIM-Bangalore*)

Skilling today is one of the most talked about interventions to take us well into and beyond the 21st century capitalizing on the demographic dividend India as a country has over the next two decades. With technology growing at an exponential scale, growing more than 100 times in capacity, speed, and efficiency each generation, it makes all the more sense to collaborate with the two and find technological solutions to manage and grow the operational scale of skilling at district and state levels.

The Karnataka Skill Connect Portal (KSCP) is one of the new flagship initiatives of the Karnataka Skill Development Corporation, the State Skill Development Mission for Karnataka, designed and developed in partnership to work towards the goal of Jobs for All envisaged by the Government

of Karnataka.

With a lofty vision of giving 1 crore opportunities through jobs, apprenticeships, projects, internships and courses to the youth of the state by the year 2026, the portal boasts of an excellent tech stack with a variety of self-development tools such as the Psychometric Test, Technical Skill Assessment and Aspiration Engine.

This paper talks about the various stakeholders in the skill ecosystem and how they interact with each other and the introduction of a portal to bring about a convergence. It also analyzes how the existing ecosystem interacts in this digital framework and how the introduction of this can benefit mandated routine activities such as job fairs from a data management and efficiency standpoint.

The state as catalyst – lessons from Meghalaya's agricultural and Institutional Renaissance

Dipin V Panicker (IIM Calcutta Innovation Park, Government of Meghalaya)

This paper examines the Meghalaya Model of Development – Meghalaya's pioneering approach to agricultural transformation, built on an inclusive, bottom-up governance framework that empowers every farmer as a co-creator of development. Moving away from siloed, scheme-driven interventions, the state adopted a value chain-based strategy that integrates production, processing, branding, and market access while embedding community ownership at its core. Farmer collectives – Integrated Village Cooperative Societies, Producer Groups, and multipurpose cooperatives – own and operate critical infrastructure, manage enterprises, and shape policy feedback loops. The institutional architecture, led by the Meghalaya Basin Management Agency and complemented by innovations such as LIFCOM and PRIME Hubs, is deliberately agile: responsive to local contexts, adaptive to climatic and market shifts, and capable of converging public, private, and community resources. This distributed governance model operationalizes subsidiarity, positioning the state as a facilitator and investor rather than a top-down controller. By aligning financial inclusion, capacity building, and enterprise development with local priorities, it ensures that the benefits of growth are equitably shared, fostering resilience, entrepreneurship, and long-term systems change. The Meghalaya experience offers transferable lessons for regions seeking to strengthen state capacity through participatory, context-sensitive, and market-linked rural development.

Driving Public Entrepreneurship through Decentralized Governance: A Case of Kaushalya Karnataka Reimagined

Amrutha Girish (IIM-Bangalore) & Rubnawas N (Karnataka Skill Development Authority)

Could a shift from a bureaucratic to an entrepreneurial mindset enhance state capacity and improve governance? This paper argues that the ongoing process to reform Chief Minister's Kaushalya Karnataka Yojane, the state's flagship scheme for short-term vocational training and

skill development, represents a structural shift led by decentralized planning and public sector entrepreneurship. This paper makes a case for moving beyond symbolic decentralization to one that enables public sector actors to think and act entrepreneurially for creating greater public value. Policies and programmes are not revised as much as they ideally should. In the event that they are, the changes instituted emerge from top leadership. There is seldom space for structured reflections and deliberations. This paper highlights how district-level machinery is being empowered and trained to design and execute market-aligned innovations and solutions. The paper also illustrates one of the microprocesses representing this structural change, where district and state officers came together in a truly decentralized fashion to deliberate the existing scheme components and skillfully employed the toolkit of 'add, keep, drop' to refine them, marking a rare instance of genuine co-creation in public policy.

New mechanisms are devised for engaging industry, ranking training partners and integrating monitoring systems to mark a transition toward adaptive, accountable, and demand-driven skilling. Rather than a simple scheme revision, this transformation reflects a bureaucratic reorientation where public officials act entrepreneurially within existing institutional constraints to create public value. By analyzing this transition, the paper contributes to public administration discourse on how decentralization and public entrepreneurship can reshape legacy schemes into proactive and locally grounded delivery models. The case of reimagining Kaushalya Karnataka demonstrates how state capacity can be enhanced through institutional innovation and entrepreneurial empowerment even in seemingly bureaucratic settings.

Practitioner's Track

Time: 12:00 – 13:30 | **Venue:** P-12

Topic: Practice & State Capacity

Chair: Subodh Kumar Gupta

Strengthening the Capacity of Gram Panchayats in Service Delivery: Convergence with Self-Help Groups

Gaurav Nayak (*Centre for Research in Schemes and Policies*)

Historically, in India, waste management has not been given much importance in rural areas. Through decentralization under the 73rd constitutional amendment, more responsibilities were given to the Gram Panchayats (GP) over several areas of service delivery, including village sanitation. There is a consensus that decentralized services, and therefore local action, depends on local government's 'capacity' which is its "ability to take and implement decisions" for providing effective services to the people (Jacob and Jacob, 2021). Despite devolving more powers to GPs, waste management in rural areas continues to be ineffective and unorganized. The rural local bodies face several challenges in managing the locally generated waste due to factors such as lack of sanitation personnel, lack of financial resources, and lack of support from the community. In several cities, urban local bodies have outsourced management to green companies under the Public Private Partnership (PPP) model, but this has not been adopted in rural areas due to resource constraints. It has been argued that for decentralized service delivery to be effective, local state institutions "cannot work independently of or even against contradictory forces coming from the social structures within which they are embedded" (Crook and Manor, 1998). Following this idea, there is a case for Gram Panchayats to engage in partnerships with citizens and civil society to make local action more effective. It is in this context that the Department of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj (RDPR), Government of Karnataka explored service delivery in Solid Waste Management (SWM) in rural areas of the state through convergence between Gram Panchayats and Self-Help Groups (SHGs). While on the one hand this programme aims to use the services of SHGs to enhance the capacity of GPs to deliver waste management services, it also promotes empowerment of women in rural areas by generating local economic opportunities. Based on field insights from 40 Gram Panchayats in Karnataka, this paper demonstrates that engaging Self-Help Groups in solid waste management can strengthen the capacity of Gram Panchayats in service delivery. Through the convergence model, SHGs can enable GPs to move towards a more effective waste management system, thereby making tangible progress in improving the cleanliness of rural areas. In essence, if the state capacity in service delivery is to be strengthened, building partnerships with community-based organizations can be an effective strategy. Such an approach can help realize the objectives of decentralization and thereby enhance local governance.

Social Learning in Rethinking State Capacity: Insights from Agroecological Transitions

Caroline E Fazli (*National Coalition for Natural Farming*)

This paper attempts to rethink state capacity by suggesting that public policy might benefit by looking beyond what the state does and explore pro-actively social learning by civil society organizations. Agroecological transitions in India is used as a lens to reconceptualize state capacity, arguing for a shift from a delivery-centric model to one grounded in co-learning and epistemic justice. Conventional state extension systems, rooted in technocratic rationality, struggle to engage with the diverse and context-specific knowledge systems that underpin agroecology. Based on field research conducted through a participatory action initiative led by the National Coalition for Natural Farming (NCNF), the study examines how farmers, civil society organizations, and community institutions generate, share, and sustain agroecological knowledge. Drawing on case studies from several different regions of India, the paper highlights the relational, experiential, and embodied nature of agroecological learning, including farmer-led study circles, feminist agroecological networks, and intergenerational knowledge systems. These cases hold up possibilities for how current public schemes like the National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF) could go beyond merely prioritizing administrative scalability in order to support a culture of learning. The paper introduces the concept of 'epistemic state capacity' – the ability of the state to recognize, value, and co-produce knowledge with citizens – as central to supporting sustainable transitions. It proposes institutional innovations to bridge the gap between grassroots innovations and policy, including plural learning infrastructures, context-sensitive metrics, and recognition of informal knowledge actors. Ultimately, the study calls for a democratic reimagining of state capacity – one that sees the state not only as a provider, but as a participant in the co-creation of ecological futures.

Schemes Without Systems: Rethinking State Capacity for Agroecological Transitions in Rajasthan and Gujarat

C Shambu Prasad (*Institute of Rural Management Anand*) & Rohith Parakh (*National Coalition for Natural Farming*)

India's agricultural policy has started to emphasize agroecological transitions, aiming to promote natural and organic farming amid ecological, nutritional and economic challenges. This paper examines the implementation gaps in Rajasthan and Gujarat, two states with ambitious natural farming policies, contrasting them with more systemic models like Andhra Pradesh's Community-managed Natural Farming (APCNF). Drawing on field insights, document analysis, and comparative policy frameworks, it focuses on the concept of 'schemes without systems', where programmatic declarations and metrics mask underdeveloped institutional scaffolding, extension ecosystems, and knowledge networks are essential for farmer behavioral change. Rajasthan's fragmented schemes, suffer from silos, limited civil society engagement and weak facilitation structures. Gujarat's high-visibility approach, led by the Natural Farming Development Board and mass outreach, prioritizes scale over depth, sidelining agroecological pioneers and peer-led learning. Both states overload weak systems with complex transitions.

The paper argues for reconceptualizing state capacity as facilitative and relational, investing in co-learning platforms, community resource persons, and adaptive governance. Without such shifts, agroecology risks remaining symbolic rather than transformative, underscoring the need for states to accompany, rather than merely deliver, sustainable agricultural change.

Making Rural Schools 'Saksham' - A report on the Centre for Public Policy at IIM Bangalore's School Development Initiatives over the years

Navaneeth Ganesh, Amrutha Girish, G Anu Kirthana (*IIM Bangalore*)

The Centre for Public Policy at Indian Institute of Management Bangalore has been involved in Rural Development Activities through initiatives such as the Jal Jeevan Mission, Unnat Bharat Abhiyan and Skill India, in areas such as Education, Training and Capacity Building, Livelihoods, and Water and Sanitation. In the education space, the work with approximately 80 government schools and anganawadis spread across four blocks in the state of Karnataka - Anekal, Belur, Tiptur and Madhugiri. Initiated under the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Institute - Saksham - the Rural School Transformation Initiative, works in five key areas with the support of the government, civil society, and industry partners - Physical Infrastructure, ICT and Digital Infrastructure, Training and Capacity Building, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, and Health and Nutrition.

This paper explores the initiatives undertaken under the Saksham Initiative to enhance the quality of educational outcomes in rural government schools and create a model for replication across the country through the higher education for development networks of the Ministry of Education.

Session 9

Time: 14:15 - 15:45 | **Venue:** P-11
Topic: Agriculture Policy/Banking & Finance
Chair: Prof. Gopal Naik

Crop Diversification v/s Risk – Effect of Crop Diversification among Heterogenous Groups in India

Firoj Kumar Sahu & Dinamani Biswal (*NIT-Silchar*)

Due to fluctuating market conditions and Frequent climate change, farmers face volatility in production value and risk of crop failure. Thus, crop diversification is widely used by farmers as a risk-mitigating strategy. This study has evaluated the effect of crop diversification on the production value, input expenditure, and the higher moments. Using data from a large household survey (NSSO) and applying a propensity score matching method, the study found that crop diversification increases the production value, input expenditure, and variance of production value. However, the increase in the variance is due to the increase in the upper variance (upside risk). The measure of both skewness and lower variance indicates that crop diversification reduces the risk of crop failure (downside risk). A larger effect was seen in the case of marginal farmers, and the farmers belong to a socially marginalized caste.

The Role of Digital Tools in Enhancing Efficiency and Reducing Losses in Post – Harvest Agricultural Supply Chain

Prashant Kumar, Saurabh Agrawal & Ankit Solanki
(*Delhi Technological University*)

Purpose: This literature review aims to comprehensively analyze the role of digital tools in enhancing efficiency and reducing losses in post-harvest agricultural supply chains, examining technological implementations, operational impacts, and implementation challenges. **Design/Methodology/Approach:** The study employs a literature review methodology, synthesizing recent research on digital technologies in post-harvest management. The review analyzes peer-reviewed articles, industry reports, and institutional publications to provide a narrative synthesis of current knowledge regarding digital tools' applications, effectiveness, and implementation barriers.

Findings: Digital integration in post-agricultural supply chains has shown significant improvements, including reduced storage losses, reduced manual inspection time, and decreased transaction costs. It also demonstrates substantial operational improvements. However, its implementation has to face significant challenges, including technical infrastructure limitations, resource constraints, knowledge gaps and cultural barriers. **Practical Implications:** Practical implications include IoT, AI, Blockchain and Big Data Analytics as

critical to enhancing quality assurance, minimizing losses, and lowering transaction costs. Managers must take a tiered approach, beginning with basic monitoring systems and progressing to full automation. Stakeholder participation and training are critical to successful implementation. **Theoretical Implications:** Theoretical implications strengthen the socio-technical side of digital transformation by promoting structured change management and data-driven decision making. Collaboration across functions is critical to reaping the full benefits of digital adoption. **Originality:** This review provides a comprehensive synthesis of current knowledge regarding digital tools in post-harvest agricultural supply chains, offering valuable insights for practitioners, policymakers, and researchers. It uniquely integrates technological, operational and implementation perspectives while identifying research gaps and future directions in digital agricultural transformation.

Informal economies in transition and public debt dynamics

Nandu Sasidharan (*University of Siena, Italy*)

This paper presents a behavioral macro-dynamic model to study the relationship between informality, structural change and public debt. Building on a structuralist framework, the research innovates by using discrete choice theory to address the probability of workers being formal or informal. The formal sector combines manufacturing and business activities, while informality refers to the non-business low-productivity sector. It is shown analytically and through numerical simulations that when capital accumulation (g) is greater than interest rates (i), the unique equilibrium point is stable, and formalization implies higher debt. Reducing informality and public debt is possible only when $i < g$. However, in this case, the equilibrium becomes unstable as the economy becomes prone to debt spirals. Numerical experiments using BRICS data show Russia, India and China belong to the first case, while Brazil and South Africa might correspond to the second. Introducing a production 'chain effect' makes the model compatible with multiple equilibria. A closer look at India suggests it is in a low-debt, high-informality trap. Overcoming this requires careful consideration of government consumption composition between sectors and realizing that a more formal economy requires accommodating higher public debt.

Monetary Policy, Debt Composition, and the Limits of State Capacity: Evidence from India's Fragmented Credit Markets

Neha Sharma & Gourishankar S Hiremath (*IIT-Kharagpur*)

This paper argues for reconceptualizing monetary transmission not merely as a technical mechanism but as an essential test of state capacity to foster inclusive, resilient financial systems. To validate the hypothesis, the researchers empirically examine how monetary policy influences corporate debt composition in India, emphasizing the implications for state capacity in financial policy delivery. Using panel data of Indian non-financial firms (2001-2024), they investigate how two distinct monetary policies signal the market-based 364-day treasury yield and the central bank's administered repo rate shapes firms' reliance on bank versus bond financing. They identify a dual-track transmission mechanism: bond-dependent firms respond strongly to treasury yield shocks, whereas bank-reliant firms react primarily to repo rate changes. These differential responses are mediated by firm characteristics such as listing status, ownership, and busi-

ness group affiliation, highlighting persistent segmentation in India's credit system. The findings demonstrate that this segmentation reflects deeper institutional constraints limiting uniform monetary policy transmission. Specifically, India's shallow corporate bond market restricts policy effectiveness, concentrates credit access, and undermines macro-financial stability during tightening cycles. Effective monetary transmission thus depends critically on the development of inclusive, well-regulated capital markets. From a policy perspective, addressing these institutional gaps requires reforms in policy instruments and building a robust financial infrastructure. Strengthening this institutional capacity is fundamental to enhancing monetary effectiveness and promoting macroeconomic stability in emerging economies.

Understanding the Uneven Landscape of Financial Inclusion in an Emerging Economy: Evidence from India

Sandeep Kumar, Aparajita Singh (IIT-Roorkee) & Rachita Gulati (Asian Development Bank Institute, Japan)

Financial inclusion has become a critical component of socioeconomic development globally, particularly in developing economies like India. Despite rapid economic growth, large segments of India's population, especially in rural and semi-urban areas, remain underserved by formal financial services, limiting their financial mobility and resilience. Existing literature often relies on traditional and narrowly defined indicators of financial inclusion, overlooking contemporary dimensions capturing the reach to masses through digital modes and overlook regional disparities. Furthermore, it neglects spatial dependency and convergence patterns that are vital for designing tailored, region-specific policies for achieving the national financial inclusion targets. Against this backdrop, this study addresses three key research questions: (1) What are the levels and evolution of financial inclusion across Indian states and UTs? (2) Is there regional concentration in financial inclusion? (3) Do states form convergence clusters on financial inclusion with similar trajectories?

To answer these questions, the study constructs comprehensive indices of traditional and digital financial inclusion from 2001 to 2024 using a Data Envelopment Analysis-based Constrained Benefit-of-the-Doubt (constrained-BoD) model. This model allows flexible, data-driven weighting across three distinct dimensions: availability, penetration, and usage capturing supply, demand, and quality aspects of financial services. Spatial dependency is examined using Moran's I, and Phillips and Sul's (2007, 2009) club convergence method is applied to examine regional convergence patterns on the financial inclusion in India. The use of the constrained-BoD model represents a methodological advance over prior studies that apply equal, subjective, or PCA-derived weights, particularly unsuitable for small samples. By generating endogenous weights, the model reflects regional policy priorities and identifies dimensions requiring targeted intervention.

Empirical results show considerable interstate disparities. High-performing regions like Chandigarh, Delhi and Goa excel in digital financial inclusion due to robust digital infrastructure and supportive policies. In contrast, north-eastern and central states lag behind, reflecting infrastructure gaps and socioeconomic barriers that hinder the reach. Moran's I confirms persistent spatial autocorrelation, suggesting regional spillovers. Club convergence analysis identifies mul-

triple convergence clubs on financial inclusion across India, underscoring the need for tailored regional strategies rather than uniform national approaches to achieve the inclusion targets. Based on these findings, the study presents the following policy implications. First, there is a need to design and implement state-specific financial inclusion policies, particularly for underperforming states like Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and the north-eastern states. Second, the study suggests promoting interstate cooperation to transfer best practices from high-performing to low-performing regions. This will help in leveraging spatial interdependence by developing regionally coordinated strategies. Third, the study provides support to address dimension-wise heterogeneity as penetration of financial services is improving, availability and usage require focused efforts. This includes improving digital infrastructure, fostering public-private partnerships in FinTech, and running awareness campaigns to enhance digital adoption.

In all, by providing data-driven evidence of financial inclusion outcomes, this study contributes to policy modelling efforts aimed at designing more effective, inclusive financial development strategies in emerging economies.

21st August 2025 (Thursday)

Session 10

Time: 10:30 – 12:00 | Venue: P-11

Topic: Health Policy - 2

Chair: Prof. Arnab Mukherji

The Impact of Socioeconomic and Behavioural Factors on Treatment-Seeking Behaviours in Acute Illnesses: Insights from Households in Odisha, India

Ranjit Kumar Dehury, Imteyaz Ahmed (*University of Hyderabad*), Rajkishor Sahu (*IITHMR, New Delhi*) & Parthsarathi Dehury (*Asian Institute of Public Health, Bhubaneswar*)

Introduction: The relationship between socioeconomic factors with health-seeking behavior is a complex one, influenced by a myriad of factors. This paper focuses on how socioeconomic factors influence individuals' decisions to seek medical care when faced with illness or disease. Socioeconomic and behavioral factors are widely recognized as crucial determinants of health outcomes. They control individuals' decision-making capacity regarding their health-seeking behavior.

Objective: To study households' socioeconomic and behavioral factors and their impact on access to suitable sources of care for acute illnesses.

Methodology: A cross-sectional household survey method is used to conduct the research. The present paper is the outcome of a larger study that examined access to essential medicines in the province of Odisha, India. The ability to find a suitable source of care for acute illnesses is measured with the help of socioeconomic indicators of households in Odisha. The data collection is conducted in six districts - Rayagada, Kalahandi, Angul, Keonjhar, Khordha and Kendrapara. Households were chosen as the research unit. The survey took place from October 2022 to February 2023. A structured household questionnaire with a sample of 902 was used to collect the data. The independent variables in this study are household heads' education, gender, occupation, wealth index, social groups, rural-urban and source of care. The dependent variable is the "finding a suitable source of care" (Yes/No). Logistic regression analysis is applied to investigate the relationship.

Results: Out of 902, 214 (23.7%) households reported having at least one acute illness person in the house. Following household characteristics, such as rural-urban, region/districts, occupation, whether treatment is sought outside the home, and source of care were found to be significantly associated with finding a suitable source of care. When all these variables were put together in a logistic regression model, behavioral factors were found to be strongly affecting the perceived access to suitable sources of care along with the urban factor.

Conclusion: The study highlights that along with the structural growth of the healthcare system, the community acceptability aspect also needs to be strengthened. The old debate of the rural-urban divide in the provision of services has improved. However, the perceived inaccessibility is still realized in the rural areas. It is a takeaway for policymakers to work on the density of services provided in rural communities along with better communication and acknowledgement of community concerns.

Assessing the Socio-Economic, Public Health, and Gendered Impacts of State-Controlled Alcohol Sales (TASMAC) in Tamil Nadu

T. Someswar Reddy, Vishwa Rajkumar & M. Sathyapriya (*Sri Krishna Arts & Science College, Coimbatore*)

This report presents a comprehensive analysis of the multifaceted impacts of the Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation (TASMAC) on public health, gender equity and socio-economic stability within the state. Driven by critical research gaps concerning the long-term public health effects, the underrepresentation of women's experiences, and the absence of a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis, this study employs a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design. Utilizing hypothetical data generated from proposed surveys targeting the public, TASMAC officials, policymakers and de-addiction counsellors, the analysis reveals significant correlations between TASMAC operations and adverse public health outcomes. Illustrative findings indicate that households in rural/semi-urban areas are hypothetically 2.34 times more likely to report alcohol-related health issues. Furthermore, the analysis quantifies a hypothetical increase in domestic conflict and financial strain experienced by women, with alcohol-affected households showing a 78% increased likelihood of domestic conflict. The report also highlights substantial estimated social costs (₹18,500 - ₹20,500+ crore) that appear to significantly outweigh the revenue generated by the state (₹36,050 crore), especially when intangible costs are considered. The findings underscore a critical need for a paradigm shift in alcohol policy, moving away from a revenue-centric model towards one that prioritizes citizen well-being.

Increase in Tobacco Use – Unintended Consequence of Alcohol Prohibition in Bihar*

Ghanshyam Sharma (*Clemson University*)

Fueling Change: Impact of Mass Media on clean cooking fuel adoption in rural India

Cledwyn Fernandez (*Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations, New Delhi*) & Havishaye Puri (*Delhi School of Economics*)

The paper analyzes the causal impact of access to mass media on the adoption of clean cooking fuel in rural India. Using the 78th round of the National Sample Survey of India, the researchers find that overall access to mass media increases the probability of using clean cooking fuel by 32 percentage points and reduces the probability of using dirty cooking fuel by 35 percentage

points. To test causality, the researchers use an instrumental variable technique with two instruments. Their first instrument is the States/UTs-wise circulation of publications per capita, and the second instrument is the States/UTs-wise number of push SMSs sent per capita through the Government of India's Mobile Seva platform. Given the recent drive by the government to disseminate policy-related information digitally, they isolate the impact of digital mass media on the adoption of clean cooking fuel and find that digital mass media positively and significantly impacts adoption of clean cooking fuel. However, this impact is considerably weaker than the unconditional impact of mass media access. This suggests that the adoption of clean cooking fuel is still mostly driven by traditional mass media channels rather than digital ones.

Costs of Compassion: Impact of informal caregiving on caregivers' wellbeing in India

Priyanka & Sukumar Velakkal (*IIT-Kanpur*)

India is experiencing a decline in labor force participation alongside a rise in unpaid labor, particularly informal caregiving. As the demand for informal care continues to grow, there is a pressing need to strengthen the evidence base on its effects on caregivers. Using nationally representative data for adults aged 45 and above from the Longitudinal Ageing Survey of India (2017-19) and an instrumental variables strategy to address endogeneity, this study estimates the gendered impact of informal caregiving on caregivers' health, measured through health deficit accumulation using a frailty index. The findings indicate a positive and statistically significant effect on the frailty index, revealing that informal caregiving adversely affects caregivers' health. These results are robust across alternative specifications and estimation strategies. Heterogeneity analysis shows that the adverse effects are more pronounced among women in general and ageing, widowed and rural women in particular. The study underscores the need for policy interventions to expand formal long-term care systems and strengthen structured support for informal caregivers in India.

Session 11

Time: 10:30 – 12:00 | **Venue:** P-12
Topic: Infrastructure/Decentralization
Chair: G Raghuram

Environmental and Social Safeguards as Legitimation: The analysis of policy discourse for a large dam infrastructure project in Madhya Pradesh, India

Budhaditya Das (*Dr. B.R. Ambedkar University, Delhi*)

Scholarship on development-induced displacement focuses on the moment of displacement, politics and processes around it, and the outcomes of resettlement afterwards. However, infrastructure projects have a long gestation period which has been under-studied in terms of environmental and social safeguards and community well-being. This paper poses the question: how is legitimacy for an infrastructure project contested and secured through environmental and social safeguards during this gestation period? How do discourses of environment and development structure the field of infrastructural governance in a resource frontier? The paper focuses on a large-dam project in central India, the Morand Ganjal Complex (MGCP) project on tributaries of the Narmada River, which is expected to submerge about three thousand hectares of land, displace residents from eight villages in three districts of Madhya Pradesh and affect the forests of the Satpura Melghat tiger corridor. The MGCP was conceived in 2011 and construction had not started until 2025, as the project is waiting to receive approvals under India's environmental and social safeguards regime. The paper examines the implementation of policy safeguards during this period (2011-2025) related to indigenous communities, involuntary land acquisition, forest conservation and environmental impact assessments. Based on field research in two villages with Adivasi (indigenous) peoples facing submergence and a critical discourse analysis of safeguard processes, the paper theorizes dam-making time as an important period in the life of dam projects and communities affected by them. It argues that the project proponent and regulatory authorities spend dam-making time in building a favorable hydraulic imaginary in the region that limits democratic opposition and subverts safeguards processes. While the dam-affected community suffers prolonged anxiety and uncertainty about terms of compensation and resettlement, 'truth-claims' regarding potential social and environmental impacts of the project are circulated in regional, subnational and national regulatory institutions. These truth-claims produce the dam through a favorable cost-benefit analysis, demonstrating minimal environmental impacts and loss to forests and biodiversity that can be compensated or mitigated. Processes of consultation, transparency and free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) are circumvented as project-affected indigenous landowners spend dam-making time seeking resettlement information and choosing strategies of resistance, negotiation and acquiescence.

The paper argues that India's regulatory institutions and state actors actively participate in generating truth-claims and producing a hydraulic imaginary in favor of large dams that constrains the space for meaningful dialogue or public participation in deciding terms of resettlement and rehabilitation, as stipulated by the law. In this process, environmental democracy is impeded

despite the existence of safeguard policy instruments as national and subnational regulatory institutions become subject to hegemonic discourses and imaginaries.

Regional Disparities in India: Evidence of Uneven Development in Karnataka

Mohammed Hashim (Krea University)

This study examines regional disparities within Karnataka, a leading Indian state in economic growth, to understand how economic reforms have influenced intra-state inequality between regions. While Karnataka has benefited from reforms, primarily through its tertiary sector, the benefits of growth appear unevenly distributed, with northern regions, particularly the Hyderabad-Karnataka area, lagging significantly behind the state's southern regions. Using village- and town-level data on consumption expenditure and poverty rates from the SECC (Socio-Economic and Caste Census), this paper provides a granular analysis of regional inequality. Regression analysis confirms stark contrasts in development outcomes within the state, with poverty rates in northern Karnataka being up to 9% higher and consumption levels up to 25% lower than in the rest of Karnataka, particularly in the Hyderabad-Karnataka region. A similar pattern is observed when development-based clusters are used for classification. By focusing on village-level indicators, this study contributes to the literature on regional inequality in India, highlighting persistent economic disparities within states. These findings reiterate the need for more effective policy interventions to address deep-rooted regional imbalances and promote equitable development.

Shaping Consumer Perception to Foster Electric Vehicle Adoption in India

Pranshu Raghuvanshi & Anjula Gurtoo (*IISc, Bangalore*)

Electric vehicles (EVs) are essential for reducing carbon emissions, yet their adoption remains sluggish. While previous studies have extensively examined the instrumental attributes influencing EV adoption, the effect of consumer perception of these attributes has not been explored enough. With improvements in instrumental attributes, consumer perception about the same does not change due to information asymmetry and cognitive inertia. This misalignment may hinder market growth despite improvements in EV technology. This study explores consumer perceptions of EV attributes and uses the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) framework to identify behavioral factors influencing adoption. The researchers surveyed over 400 potential four-wheeler vehicle buyers using a questionnaire with 29 measurement items. Applying the Mann-Whitney U test, Exploratory Factor Analysis and Logistic Regression, they found that attitude, perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, range anxiety, and innovativeness significantly affect EV adoption intent. To check the reliability and validity of the factors, the researchers conducted a Confirmatory Factor Analysis and studied the relationship between them through Structural Equation Modelling. They further employed mediation analysis to examine the mediation pathways. The components of the TPB mediated the effect of innovativeness but not range anxiety. The study's insights can help policymakers and marketers design targeted interventions that address consumer concerns, reshape consumer perceptions, and foster greater EV adoption. The interventions can target increasing the mediating variables or decreasing range anxiety to

facilitate a smoother transition to sustainable transportation.

Challenges Faced by Municipal Bodies in India in Adopting Wastewater Initiatives*

Arun Kumar (*NLSIU, Bangalore*)

Transferable Development Rights Program in Indian Cities - Convenience in the name of neoliberalism

Astha Agarwalla (*CEPT University, Ahmedabad*)

State capacity has been defined as the ability to get things done, or more formally, the power to exercise control within its jurisdiction (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2001). The researchers use this lens to examine the Transferable development rights (TDR) program as implemented by two metropolitan cities in India, Ahmedabad and Chennai. They employ the economic sociology lens to trace the trajectory of urban planning and FSI regulation in India, that laid down the path for TDR program (Issar, 2022), to ascertain how state acquired the ability to sell the right to develop. They further utilize the political economy framework developed by Lindval and Teorell (2016), to assess the use of TDRs as instruments to exercise state power. They discuss how TDR program has been used by Indian cities to achieve the twin objectives of controlling density growth in a market friendly way, and generating resources to fund other public welfare/infrastructure initiatives. They discuss how TDR as an instrument was recalibrated to suit the local context. Neo-liberal thrust to incentivize private developers was used more as a convenient way of off-budget financing and selective benevolence. The researchers further conclude that at the level of the effectiveness of the instrument, TDR program in Ahmedabad has been able to achieve the state's objectives, while TDR program in Chennai exhibits weak state capacity, in achieving the desired twin objectives of controlling and financing growth.

Gallery



CBPS conducts an interactive policy workshop



Practitioners track presentation about Saksham by Navaneeth Ganesh



Felicitating our guests for their contribution to this year's conference



Prof. G Ramesh in conversation with a participant before a talk





तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT BANGALORE
BANNERGHATTA ROAD, BENGALURU 560 076



Email: cpp@iimb.ac.in | Tel: +91 80 2699 3323